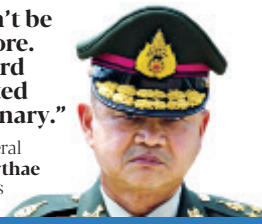




"There shouldn't be (a coup) any more. For me, this word should be deleted from the dictionary."

Thai army chief General Narongpan Jitkaewthae says as election looms



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GREAT DANGER SIGNAL 8 FOR 12 DISTRICTS

Mocha gets even STRONGER

The biggest cyclone in 16 years may strike at a speed of 175km per hour

STAR REPORT

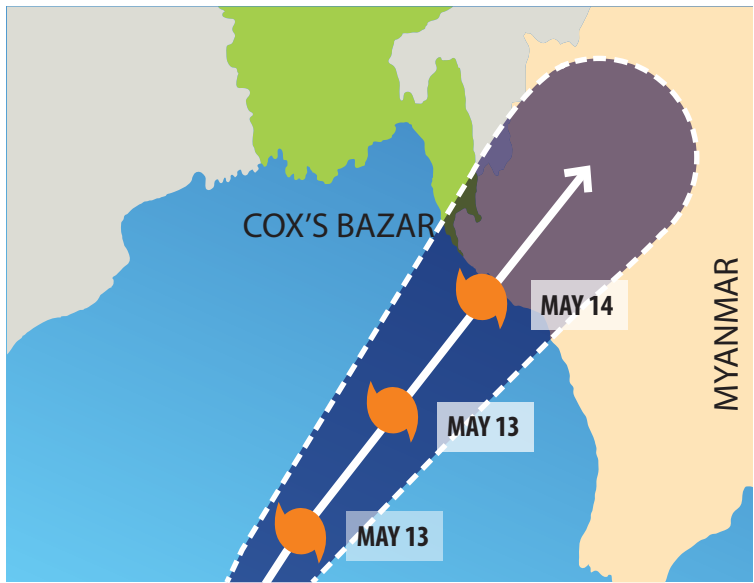
Gaining more and more strength with each passing hour, Cyclone Mocha is likely to turn into an extremely severe cyclonic storm by this morning, say forecasts.

Officials predict floods in vast areas along the coastline and storm surges up to 12 feet in Teknaf where the cyclone may make landfall around noon on Sunday.

This season's first cyclone was around 800km south-southwest of Cox's Bazar at 9:00pm yesterday, approaching the coast at a speed of 15km per hour, said Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD).

The Met office advised "great danger signal no-8" for 12 coastal districts, including Chattogram, Cox's Bazar, Noakhali, Feni, Laxmipur, and Bhola. This means there is a possibility that the wind speed may exceed 90km per hour in these districts.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



Probe polls code violation by GM Quader

EC asks Barishal DC

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barishal

The Election Commission yesterday asked for a probe into alleged violation of the electoral code of conduct by Jatiya Party Chairman GM Quader.

The EC directed the Barishal deputy commissioner to investigate the allegation and submit a report by today.

DC Jahangir Hossain said he received a letter in this regard.

According to media reports, Quader, also the deputy leader of the opposition in parliament, on Thursday took part in processions, meetings, and election campaigns

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

Imran Khan gets two-week bail

HC bars authorities from arresting him in any other case till May 15

AFP, Islamabad

Former Pakistan prime minister Imran Khan was granted bail by the Islamabad High Court yesterday, after his arrest on corruption charges this week sparked deadly clashes before being declared illegal.

"The court has granted Imran Khan two weeks interim bail and has directed the authorities not to arrest him in the (graft) case," Khan's lawyer Khawaja Harris told reporters.

The High Court also ruled that Khan, who remained on the court premises, could not be arrested before Monday in any other case registered against him,

including charges related to the violent riots ignited by his detention this week, said another one of his lawyers, Tahir Malik.

"The head of the country's largest party was abducted, kidnapped from the high court, and in front of the entire nation," Khan told AFP from the courtroom.

"They treated me like a terrorist, this had to have a reaction," he said of the protests that followed.

Khan has become tangled in a slew of legal allegations – a frequent hazard for opposition figures in Pakistan – since

SEE PAGE 6 COL 2

Why so many cyclones in May?

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Weather conditions in May create a perfect recipe for cyclones in the Bay of Bengal.

Since no low pressure has been created in the Bay this year, the heat energy has accumulated, and this may turn cyclone Mocha into a super cyclone, according to officials at Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD).

From 1891 to 2022, a total of 530 cyclones formed in the Bay of Bengal, and 65 of those happened in the month of May, they said.

The cyclones formed in May make landfall mostly in Myanmar. Fewer cyclones make landfall in India and Bangladesh.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6



"There will be major impacts both ahead and after landfall for potentially hundreds of thousands of the world's most vulnerable people."

Clare Nullis
Spokesperson, World Meteorological Organization (WMO)

INDIAN OCEAN REGION

PM outlines six priorities

Inaugurates conference attended by 25 countries



UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has outlined six priority areas, including fostering maritime diplomacy and partnership, and strengthening maritime security and mutual trust, for the Indian Ocean countries to ensure prosperity.

"Despite its potential, the region faces many challenges. The countries in the Indian Ocean region, therefore, need to foster partnerships and cooperation for ensuring peace and prosperity for all," she said.

The PM was addressing an event marking the inauguration of the 6th Indian Ocean Conference 2023 at a city hotel yesterday.

Dhaka is hosting the two-day conference with participation of high-level government delegations and think tanks from at least 25 countries.

Hasina said given its geographical position, the Indian Ocean holds significant importance not only for Bangladesh, but also for all other regional countries. Bangladesh has recently formulated its Indo-Pacific Outlook, she added.

The PM said the countries in the Indian Ocean region should foster "maritime diplomacy" for their development, thereby ensuring a prosperous future.

She said climate vulnerability of many countries in the region calls for the need to enhance cooperation to reduce the impact of natural disasters.

Mutual trust and respect among the countries should be strengthened for building strong partnerships to ensure stability for a resilient future in the Indian Ocean, Hasina added.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

PHOTO ON PAGE 2, RELATED STORY ON PAGE 12



Families of fishermen leave their homes for safety with their belongings in Chattogram city's Akmal Ali Ghat area as the country braces for Cyclone Mocha. The families still have terrible memories of Cyclone Sitrang's destruction in October last year when their homes were flattened. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

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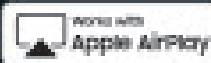
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GAZIPUR CITY POLLS

BNP serves show-cause notices on 30 leaders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP yesterday issued show-cause notices to its 30 leaders and activists for running for councillor posts in Gazipur City Corporation polls, ignoring the party decision.

They have been asked to submit their written replies to the central office within 24 hours as to why organisational action should not be taken against them.

"The 30 BNP men were served separate notices. The party would take strict action against those who participated in the city election. Party'sacting chairman Tarique Rahman has given a strong message in this regard," Shawkat Hossain, member secretary of Gazipur city unit BNP, told The Daily Star.

Of the 30 BNP men, Faisal Ahmad Sarkar, member secretary of city unit Sramik Dal, was elected unopposed as councillor in ward-15.

"The BNP has decided not to take part in any kind of election under this government. But you, being a member of the party, ignored this decision thinking of personal interest," read the notice signed by BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi.

The BNP earlier announced boycotting of the upcoming mayoral polls to five city corporations and said it would go tough on its leaders and activists who will run for councillor posts and those who will patronise them.

Though the councillor election is non-partisan in nature, some grassroots leaders, especially the current councillors, want to contest the polls, causing discomfort within the party.

Trader found dead in Tangail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Police recovered the body of a local trader near an irrigation pump house in Tangail's Nagarpur upazila yesterday.

The dead is Yusuf Miah, 60, of Bhatshala village, said police.

Yusuf went missing on Thursday afternoon. His body was found hanging from a shed at bottle gourd field today, said Nuruzzaman, his brother.

Sazzad Hossain, officer-in-charge of Nagarpur Police Station, said police sent the body to Tangail General Hospital morgue for autopsy.

The reason behind his death could not be known immediately, he added.

Mocha gets even stronger

FROM PAGE 1

BMD Director Azizur Rahman last night said Mocha could make landfall in Teknaf and wind speed could reach 175 kmph.

"The cyclone is still getting stronger. We checked several models and believe that it will not be a super cyclone," he added.

Humanitarian information portal ReliefWeb in a statement last night said the cyclone would expose nearly eight lakh people in Bangladesh and around 30 lakh in Myanmar to danger.

Meanwhile, fear of devastation has gripped the Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar where over 10 lakh refugees live in houses mostly made of corrugated iron sheets and wood.

The World Meteorological Organisation in a briefing in Geneva



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina poses for a photo with the top-level dignitaries from the Indian Ocean countries at the inaugural session of the 6th Indian Ocean Conference-2023 at a city hotel yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

Exploitative practices led to halt in hiring of Bangladeshis

Say Malaysian palm oil firms as West hardens import rules

REUTERS, Kuala Lumpur

Some of Malaysia's largest palm oil producers are not hiring workers from Bangladesh because of concerns over exploitative practices during recruitment, companies and labour consultants say.

Planters in the world's second largest palm oil producer have in recent years stepped up efforts to implement ethical recruitment processes and revamp labour standards after the United States banned imports from two companies over allegations of forced labour.

Migrant workers, especially from Indonesia, India, Bangladesh and Nepal, make up about 80 percent of the workforce on Malaysia's labour-reliant estates.

The Malaysian government suspended all hiring from Bangladesh in 2018 after allegations of corruption in the process. Despite a new labour agreement between the two countries coming into force last year, three plantation companies say their firms have not resumed hiring Bangladeshi workers.

"The main reason was due to a high rate of abscondment among the Bangladesh workers as they were not aware that they

were going to work in plantation estates," IOI Plantation IOIB.KL, which has not recruited from Bangladesh since 2018, said in an emailed response to Reuters.

A senior executive with another company cited a lack of transparency in the recruitment process and high recruitment fees among workers from

The International Labour Organisation ranks deception and debt bondage stemming from large recruitment fees among its indicators of "forced labour".

Bangladesh.

Sime Darby Plantation SIPL.KL, the world's largest palm oil producer, said it stopped hiring from Bangladesh in 2016. That year, the company also introduced changes aimed at implementing a "zero recruitment fee policy".

The International Labour Organisation

ranks deception and debt bondage stemming from large recruitment fees among its indicators of "forced labour".

Hundreds of workers from South Asia have recently arrived in Malaysia without jobs despite being promised employment and after paying thousands of dollars in recruitment fees. Malaysia has begun investigations.

Malaysia's Human Resources Ministry and the Bangladeshi embassy in Kuala Lumpur did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

The Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO), an industry watchdog based in Malaysia, said proposed legislation in the European Union to prohibit the import and sales of products made with forced labour has prompted the palm oil industry to further address human rights in their operations.

"The industry, in general, is being called to greater degrees of sustainability, transparency and accountability, with external stakeholders - from regulators to financial institutions, investors and consumers - prompting this shift," RSPO chief executive officer Joseph D'Cruz said.

added that there were around 60,000 residents in his constituency.

Thousands of people in Khulna, Satkhira, Bhola and Patuakhali are in fear too.

A 12km embankment in Khulna's Koyra upazila is vulnerable and locals fear that many villages will be completely flooded.

Cyclone Sitrang last year damaged around 100 km of embankment in Bhola. But it has not been repaired yet.

"My village will go underwater if the embankment is breached. From what I hear, huge waves are likely to breach it," said Muhammad Ibrahim, a resident of Tulatoli area of Bhola.

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

The government has prepared 1,606 shelter centres in Cox's Bazar and

Chattogram for about 10 lakh people, said a press release.

In Cox's Bazar, about 8,600 volunteers of Cyclone Preparedness Programme (CPP) and 2,200 of Red Crescent Society will help people evacuate and reach the shelters.

In Chattogram, the Civil Surgeon Office has formed 284 medical teams. A total of 16,880 volunteers of CPP and Red Crescent have been engaged.

On Bhasan Char island, over Rohingya 28,000 refugees are being prepared for evacuation. They will take shelter in 53 centres.

In Rajshahi, farmers are rushing to harvest paddy from the field.

[Our correspondents from the respective districts contributed to the report.]

Rohingya man shot dead in Ukhiya camp

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

A Rohingya man was shot dead at a refugee camp in Ukhiya of Cox's Bazar on Thursday night.

The dead is Kabir Ahmed, 35, of Kutupalong Refugee Camp 7.

Another man was injured in the incident that took place at Palangkhali Camp 9 on Thursday night, said Syed Harun or Rashid, additional deputy inspector general of APBn-8.

A group of 10-12 criminals picked Kabir up from the camp and tied up his hand behind his back. They later shot him, leaving him critically injured, added Rashid, also the commanding officer of the APBn battalion.

Kabir's friend Mohammad Rafiq also suffered bullet wounds during the incident, said Rashid quoting locals.

The injured were rushed to an MSF-run hospital where doctors declared Kabir dead, he added.

The body was sent to Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Man arrested for killing wife

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinaipur

Rab has arrested a man for allegedly stabbing his wife to death over dowry in Lalmonirhat's Patgram.

The arrestee is Dulal Hossain, 41, of the upazila's Muglibari village, said Rab officials at a press briefing in Rangpur yesterday.

Members of Rab-13 arrested Dulal from Bogura's Adamdighi on Thursday afternoon, said Arafat Hossain, commanding officer of Rab-13 in Rangpur.

Dulal stabbed his wife Sahida Begum following an altercation over dowry on April 15 night. She died at Patgram Upazila Health complex, said the Rab official.

Later, the victim's brother filed a case with Patgram Police Station against Dulal. Rab handed him over to Patgram Police Station, he further said.

Fish trader beaten to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

A fish trader was beaten to death allegedly by his opponents in Habiganj's Bahubal on Thursday night.

The victim is Mosabbir Mia, 20, of Tarapasha village in the upazila.

Police sent the body to Habiganj 250-bed Hospital for autopsy yesterday morning.

According to locals, Sahar Mia, of the same area, hit Mosabbir with stick on his head following an altercation. Locals then rushed him to Habiganj Sadar Hospital where doctors declared him dead.

Police were investigating the matter and a case would be filed in this connection, said Rakibul Islam Khan, officer-in-charge of Bahubal Model Police Station.

Why so many cyclones in May?

FROM PAGE 1

In Bangladesh, these cyclones make landfalls in Sandwip, Hatiya, Chattogram, and Cox's Bazar, BMD officials have said.

"The sea surface temperatures rise in May and create wind shear. The difference in wind speed between the upper and lower levels widens creating the perfect conditions for cyclogenesis to occur," Muhammad Abul Kalam Mallik, meteorologist at BMD, told The Daily Star.

The sea surface temperature remains 25-28 degrees Celsius, but now it is over 30 degrees Celsius, he added.

The condition for cyclone formation includes a temperature of over 27 degrees Celsius from a depth of 60 metres to the surface of the sea and a humidity of over 40 percent.

The cyclones that happen during this time of the year usually leave a trail of destruction, BMD officials say.

In the Bay of Bengal, cyclones mostly form during pre-monsoon and post-monsoon periods due to the sea surface temperatures and the pre-monsoon ones often turn severe in nature.

Mostafa Kamal Palash, a weather and climate researcher at the University of Saskatchewan in Canada said the sun starts moving towards the northern hemisphere in March and lies directly above the Tropic of Cancer at the summer solstice, which usually falls on June 21.

"In May, the sun lies directly over the middle of the Bay of Bengal, which helps increase the sea surface temperature and the ocean heat content, both of which serve as the primary ingredients needed to form tropical cyclones.

When these happen simultaneously, a cyclone becomes very energetic and occasionally becomes a super cyclone, he added.

PM outlines six priorities

FROM PAGE 1

The premier said the regional countries should strengthen existing mechanisms on maritime safety and security in the Indian Ocean, including response to emergencies at sea, conduct of search and rescue, uphold the exercise of freedom of navigation and overflight, in accordance with international law.

She said the countries should promote "culture of peace" and people-centric development in the region. Women, half of the global population, should get due attention, for building peaceful, just and inclusive societies in the region, the PM observed.

Hasina said the regional countries should promote open, transparent, rules-based multilateral systems that facilitate equitable and sustainable development in the region and beyond through inclusive economic growth.

She said the oceans and seas account for 90 percent of world trade and 60 percent of oil transportation. The real value of global maritime trade has increased remarkably in the past 15 years, she added.

Although oceans offer excellent opportunities in supporting

sustainable development in countries across the world, much of their potential still remains untapped, the PM observed.

She noted that the Indian Ocean region has significant economic, political, and strategic implications in the Asia-Pacific and African regions.

Hasina said the theme of the conference -- Peace, Partnership and Prosperity: Towards a resilient future -- is very appropriate and timely.

"The theme becomes all the more relevant in the light of the recent Covid-19 pandemic, and the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict, and consequent sanctions and counter-sanctions. These have posed unprecedented challenges for all nations world over."

The PM said global recession, food, energy, and fertiliser crises have resulted in unbearable living conditions for all people of the world.

She said the Indian Ocean region is also facing challenges such as climate change, maritime security, terrorism, and natural disasters.

"To overcome them, the countries in the region must come together to build partnership, and put collective efforts

place, he added.

EMBANKMENTS IN POOR STATE

In Chattogram, Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) has identified vulnerabilities in a total of 50 kilometres of embankment.

Noruttom Banik, a resident of Maitbhanga area of Sandwip upazila, said the embankment, which was supposed to protect the villages from storm surges, was in a poor state and a big surge may easily breach it.

Abul Khair Nadim, the local union parishad chairman, said, "It was repaired the last time in 2008. Nothing has been done since."

Mehedi Hasan, chairman of Sonadia union parishad, said the embankment over a length of five kilometres was in a bad shape. He

to promote peace and prosperity, for a brighter region."

Hasina said Bangladesh views the "culture of peace" as an essential element that will reinforce all aspects of peace. That's why Bangladesh is committed to UN's global peacekeeping and peace-building endeavors, the premier added.

She said despite many challenges, Bangladesh provided temporary shelter to more than 1.1 million forcibly displaced Myanmar nationals. This gesture avoided a major humanitarian catastrophe in the region, the PM said.

"Now, we seek support from the global community to repatriate the Rohingya people to their homeland in a safe and sustainable manner," she added.

Speaking at the inaugural session, Indian External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said they believe that a seamless transition into an Indo-Pacific is to their collective advantage.

He reiterated India's commitment to the well-being and progress of all nations of the Indian Ocean.

"We have dedicated bodies like the Indian Ocean Rim Association or the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium, with their specific mandates. We expand on

that belief through the Neighbourhood First policy, the SAGAR outlook and our approach to the extended neighbourhood," the minister said.

Jaishankar appreciated the personal support and encouragement extended by Hasina.

Referring to the release of Bangladesh's Indo-Pacific Outlook on April 24, the Indian minister said, "By doing so, Bangladesh joined a number of countries ranging from ASEAN and East Asia to Europe and North America in articulating its thinking on this important subject."

He said Bangladesh's views are particularly noteworthy because of its standing as a progressive and successful developing economy that is making its fullest contribution to regional growth and prosperity.

Jaishankar said when nations disregard their legal obligations or violate long-standing agreements, the damage to trust and confidence is immense. "It is therefore essential that all of us take the long view of our cooperation, rather than a tactical one of our interests."

The minister said the Indian Ocean countries must be conscious of the

‘Meditation can reduce medical expenditure’

Experts welcome govt’s move of inclusion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Welcoming the government’s decision to include meditation in healthcare, health experts said the move will reduce medical expenditure. They also urged the government to make it a part of the medical curriculum.

They made the remarks in a programme organised by Quantum Foundation at IDEB auditorium yesterday.

Recently, the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) in a circular instructed hospitals and health complexes to ensure patients are brought under meditation.

Addressing the discussion as chief guest, National Professor Dr Shahla Khatun said, “The cure of mind is as important as the cure of the body.”



Demonstrators stage a satirical play, along with other events standing against DSCC’s move to cut down trees for the city’s development in the continued protest organised by Saat Masjid Road Tree Protection Movement in front of Abhani Ground yesterday. In the demonstration, they also released a four-point demand statement.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

‘Don’t want mayor who cuts trees’

Activists, locals continue protests against tree felling at Saat Masjid Road

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

People from all walks of life gathered in Saat Masjid Road yesterday as part of their continued protest against tree cutting. They said they don’t want development by cutting trees.

They also shouted slogans like – “We don’t want a mayor, who cuts trees”, “Cutting down trees will not stop the movement” and more.

Saat Masjid Road Tree Protection Movement have been staging the protest since last week and yesterday they arranged the rally in front of the Abahani Ground.

President of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolan (Bapa) Sultana Kamal, Chief Executive of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (Bela) Syeda Rizwana Hasan, Founder and member of Naripokkho Shireen Huq, researcher Pavel Partha, Coordinator of Saat Masjid Road Tree Protection Movement Amirul Rajiv and others spoke in the rally.

Sultana Kamal said, “To cut down trees is like killing people.”

Regarding the DSCC mayor’s “apology” for cutting trees, she said, “I did not hear the mayor apologise. And if he did say sorry, why did he say it? It’s because he has done something wrong here. If you say sorry and do it again, then this sorry has no value to us.”

Syeda Rizwana Hasan said, “This year, Dhaka’s temperature broke all records. Dhaka’s air is also highly polluted. At such a time, DSCC cut down trees in the name

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

How did Sajal and Jerin die?

Deaths of two students remain a mystery even after 4 years

EMRUL HASAN BAPPI and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Justice delayed is justice denied. This phrase is a harsh reality for the families of Aminul Islam Sajal and Marium Chowdhury Jerin, two students whose deaths four years ago at a residential hotel in Dhaka’s Farmgate, remain shrouded in mystery.

Despite investigations, no one has been held accountable

Their families have rejected two probe reports submitted by Tejgaon police and the Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI), which were presented to a Dhaka court.

for their deaths, leaving their families in a state of despair and hopelessness. They now question the efficacy of the criminal justice system in Bangladesh and the investigative agencies.

Aminul Islam Sajal, a student of Tejgaon College, and Marium Chowdhury Jerin, a student of World University, were found dead in a room at Hotel Samrat on April 2, 2019.

Their families have rejected two probe reports submitted by Tejgaon police and the Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI), which were presented to a Dhaka court.

“Initially, police told us they collected the CCTV footage of the movements of the deceased at the hotel, but later they denied

this,” said Mostak Ahammed Chowdhury, Jerin’s father.

“Four years have passed, and yet we don’t know how my daughter and her friend died.”

“We have become tired of running to courts and various investigative agencies for justice. My wife and I are now very sick. I don’t know where I’ll get justice for my daughter’s killing.”

Sajal’s father, Mosharraf Hossain, alleged that the police

investigation was negligent, and important evidence was spoiled.

“We think some influential people were involved in this incident. Two students died, but no investigating agencies did anything to preserve the evidence,” he said.

ANOMALIES IN THE CASE

There are several anomalies surrounding the case.

On the day the bodies were recovered, both families went to Tejgaon Police Station to file a murder case. But the police registered an unnatural death case instead.

Frustrated with Tejgaon police, Jerin’s father Mostak Ahammed Chowdhury filed a murder case with a Dhaka court on May 14, 2019, accusing Samrat Hotel

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

NILIMA JAHAN

Despite dedicated efforts of obstetric and gynaecology specialists to reduce maternal and infant mortality rates, address cancer and infertility, and achieve SDGs, their numbers are disproportionately inadequate to serve half the population of the country.

Furthermore, promotions in the field are also slow, with 993 junior consultants, registrars, medical officers and others serving in various government hospitals awaiting their overdue promotions for the assistant professor position for the last 8 to 15 years.

As a result, young doctors are displeased, which has trickled down to the quality of care provided to a vast number of patients.

According to Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) data, there are currently only 214 positions available under the Obstetrics and Gynaecology department in 638 government hospitals, despite a total of 1,536 specialists having been serving countrywide.

Out of the 214 available posts, only 19 out of 48 professor positions are currently filled, while the number of serving associate professors (which is supposed to be double that of

professors) is only 36 against the 66 positions.

Meanwhile, there are 220 assistant professors working across the country against 100 available positions, and the rest have been serving as junior consultants, medical officers, registrars and other positions.

The present situation indicates that there is a worrying shortage of doctors. In a country where the annual number of pregnancies is 36 lakh, there is only one doctor available for every 2,374 pregnant mothers.

However, despite this

We are yet to develop proper sub-specialty positions in this field, even though other departments have done it a long time ago. This amounts to nothing but negligence, discrimination, and injustice towards women.

Prof Ferdousi Begum Flora
Obstetrics and Gynecological Society of Bangladesh President

The insufficient recognition and promotion in the workplace often causes significant concerns, hindering our ability to deliver improved services in the management of maternal mortality and maternal health.

Dr Raunak Jahan
Fetomaternal medicine specialist

shortage, these doctors have managed to provide over 34 lakh antenatal visits, more than 12 lakh postnatal visits, and performed over 9 lakh deliveries, which include around 5 lakh normal deliveries and more than 4 lakh cesarean section deliveries in 2022 alone.

The majority of the 993 junior consultants and others waiting for promotion to assistant professor positions have completed their FCPS and MS in general gynaecology and obstetrics, high-risk pregnancy, cancer and infertility.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Teen drowns in Dhaka pond

UNB, Dhaka

A 17-year-old boy drowned in a pond while taking a bath in Shonir Akhra area of Dhaka yesterday, said police.

Md Alamgir from Faridpur used to live with his family in Paterbag under Kadamtali Police Station the city.

He was a workshop worker by profession in the same area.

His cousin Hridoy said Alamgir and some of his friends went into the pond to take bath in Shonir Akhra around noon.

All the friends except Alamgir emerged from the pond after bath, the cousin said.

Around a half hour later, locals recovered his body from the pond and rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where physicians declared him dead, he said. Md Bachchu Miah, an in-charge of the DMCH police outpost, said the body was kept at the hospital morgue for autopsy.

Five hospitalised with dengue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least five dengue patients were hospitalised in the last 24 hours till yesterday morning.

With the new cases, the total number of dengue patients this year rose to 1,196, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

Some 97 dengue patients are still undergoing treatment, of whom, 20 are from outside Dhaka.

A total of 1,087 dengue patients were released from hospitals, of which, 490 were from outside Dhaka.

The total number of dengue-related deaths was 281 last year while the total number of patients was 62,382. Of whom, 23,162 were from outside Dhaka, according to DGHS.

Experts urged the authorities concerned to conduct extensive drives to identify clusters of Aedes mosquitoes as soon as possible.

Nazrul’s daughter-in-law Kalyani Kazi no more

STAR REPORT

Renowned singer and youngest daughter-in-law of National Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam Kalyani Kazi is no more. The artiste, who was the wife of Kazi Nazrul Islam’s youngest son Kazi Aniruddha, breathed her last yesterday morning in Kolkata, at 87.

According to media reports, Kalyani had been suffering from leukaemia and renal problems for some time. The artiste’s family shared that she died of multiple organ failures yesterday morning around 5:30am.

Kalyani Kazi was a member of Kazi Nazrul Islam Academy’s advisory council. The musical maestro was also honoured with the Sangeet Mohashomman Award from West Bengal in 2015.



Affordable vegetarian food at Jagannath Bhojonalay

MD ABBAS

Tucked away on the first floor of 110 no building in Old Dhaka’s Tanti Bazar lies a hidden gem that has been serving up some of the most delicious and affordable vegetarian cuisines for over two decades. With a menu boasting 28 to 30 different vegetable-based options at prices ranging from Tk 10 to Tk 50, Jagannath Bhojonalay has become a popular destination for anyone seeking a satisfying yet budget-friendly meal.

Customer Krishna Rani Mandal shared that she has been visiting the restaurant for the past ten years and has not missed a single weekend.

The current owner of the restaurant Ajay Krishna Dashadhikary acquired it from Sub-Inspector Nikhil three years ago. Nikhil and his father operated the restaurant for 14 years before that, which was established in 2002 by a man named Shamyal.

The restaurant’s varied selection of alternatives impressed Sujan Chandra Ghosh, an assistant director for Bangladesh Bank. “We had a wonderful experience here, indulging in nine different dishes followed by payesh. The total bill was a mere Tk 360.”

According to Shah Md Nura Alam, assistant manager at DHL Global Forwarding, the unique behaviour of the staff and the pleasant atmosphere of the restaurant made it stand out among its competitors.

Asked how the restaurant manages to sell dishes at such low prices, Ajay explained that they make a small profit and attract customers due to their affordability.

Jagannath Bhojonalay has gained popularity not only among Hindus but also among people of different religions who come to enjoy their meals, he added.



People indulge in a feast of affordable vegetarian cuisine at Jagannath Bhojonalay, which serves over 28 mouthwatering dishes. The place has gained popularity among people of all walks of life who visit here regularly for a good meal.

PHOTO: STAR

Patuakhali coasts

FROM PAGE 5
Mirzaganj, Kalapara, Rangabali, Galachipa, Baulfal and Dumki -- are in critical condition.

WDB has repaired embankments in some villages, but many areas are still unprotected. Md Arif Hossain, executive engineer of WDB in Patuakhali, said the district's 18km out of the 800km dyke has been identified as risky.

Meantime, repair work has started at Golkhali and Piprakhali in Mirzaganj. Khalid Bin Walid, executive engineer of WDB at Kalapara circle, said 5.5km out of 520km

of dykes in Kalapara and Rangabali upazilas are vulnerable. He also said they are keenly observing the cyclone situation.

Meanwhile, they have stocked enough geo bags to carry out immediate prevention if the levee in any area is broken, said Khalid.

In the latest update yesterday, maritime ports of Chattogram, Cox's Bazar, Mongla and Payra were advised to hoist local warning Signal 4 as Cyclone Mocha made its way to the southeastern coast of Bangladesh, according to the meteorological department.

Slain blogger

FROM PAGE 5
organisations offered flowery tribute to the monument.

They also observed silence in his remembrance.

Misbah Uddin Siraj, former organising secretary of Awami League, Prof Nazia Chowdhury of Shahjalal University of Science and Technology, Ananta's brother-in-law Samar Bijoy, environmental rights activist Abdul Karim Kim and others spoke at the memorial programme, moderated by Gonojagoron Mancha Sylhet's spokesperson Debashish Debu.

Don't want mayor

FROM PAGE 3
of development. We think it's irrational. The locals don't want this development, cause if they did, no movement would have been staged."

Amirul Rajiv said, "We have two demands -- that measures be taken to protect trees from the impending cyclone by removing the soil from the base of the road divider and placing soil at the base of the trees that DSCC has made risky; and to remove concrete and sand from road dividers and put

soil there."

The protestors gave a seven-day ultimatum to DSCC and said if DSCC does not announce the implementation of their demands, all social, cultural and environmental students and youth organisations will jointly organise a seize programme at the Nagar Bhaban.

Various cultural organisations arranged cultural programmes against the felling of trees on Saat Masjid Road as a part of the event.

222 candidates collect

FROM PAGE 5
candidates Abdul Gaffar Biswas who is also a former lawmaker, SM Shafiqur Rahman, Engineer Syed Kamrul Islam.

Returning Officer Md Alauddin said seven candidates for the mayor's post, 175 for the general councillor's post and 40 for the reserved councillor's post collected nomination papers by Friday.

He said the candidates

are advised to follow the electoral code of conduct and also instructed to remove promotional materials. Though the formal electioneering is yet to start, candidates and their supporters under several banners are on the field to woo voters.

A total of 5, 35, 528 voters under 31 wards are expected to cast their votes on June 12 from 8:00am to 4:00pm.

How did Sajal

FROM PAGE 3
owner Jasim Uddin Chowdhury Kochi, its manager Rasel Ahmed Suman Liton, supervisor Ahammad Hossain and some unnamed persons. Twelve days later, the court directed the officer-in-charge of Tejgaon Police Station to submit a report after investigating the case.

On August 31, 2020, Shariful Islam, a sub-inspector of Tejgaon Police Station, prepared a probe report and filed it with the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, saying they did not find any evidence against anyone involved in the victims' deaths.

Almost five months later, PBI was given the charge of the investigation after the complainant Mostak filed a no-confidence petition with the court against the probe report.

In November 2021, PBI sub-inspector Nuruzzaman submitted a report before the court, saying the charge against the accused was not found true.

Later, Mostak also filed another no-confidence petition with the court against the PBI probe report. Then the court assigned the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) as the investigating agency.

In their reports, investigators Shariful Islam and Nuruzzaman stated that both victims died due to excessive consumption of drugs.

Meanwhile, the autopsy report prepared by the forensic department at Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College in April 2019 states, "Sajal's death was due to asphyxia caused by the toxicity produced by drug Dapoxetine, while no cause of Jerin's death could be ascertained. No sign of forceful sexual intercourse was found on her body."

However, Dr Shahidullah Shikder, professor of the dermatology and venereology department

Kishoreganj's Katiadi lights up

FROM PAGE 5
Crowds of people, irrespective of caste, creed, and religion gather at the fair.

A good number of visitors from different parts of the country come to see Ray's place but they leave dissatisfied over the broken condition of this renowned palace, said advocate Md Farid Uddin from Masua.

Satyajit Ray's father Sukumar Ray and grandfather Upendrakishore Ray were born at this palace.

But the legacy of these world-famous personalities has not been preserved properly yet, Lamented local people.

Khanzada Shahriar Bin Mannan, upazila nirbahi officer (UNO) in Katiadi said the fair is being held at Ray's ancestral house as part of its glorious historical past.

"The house is under the charge of the Department of Archeology. A team had visited the location recently and they started the renovation work of the house last week," she said.

The UNO added a rest house built by Parjatan Corporation in 2015 that has been lying unused due to necessary equipment. Through the "Annual Development Programme", the rest house has been painted and necessary furniture like cots, sofa sets and dining tables have been arranged to accommodate the visitors from faraway places.

The UNO also informed that CCTV cameras have been set in the fair area to avert any untoward incident.

Of illegal logging and reign

FROM PAGE 5
"We even have to get his verbal permission to sell our own land. That's how much control he has gained over the area," said Chongreng Mro, karbari (community leader) of Puraton Devanpara community.

In 2015, some members of the Mro community protested his illegal activities. In response, Morshed and his cohorts filed false cases against them to harass the Mro community, said Menwai Mro, member of ward-9 at Lama Sorai Union Parishad.

"I'm also a victim of these false cases," he added.

However, this correspondent could not reach Morshed to verify these claims despite repeated attempts, as his phone was found switched off.

His elder brother

Khorshed Alam Chowdhury, president of Lohagara upazila unit of Awami League, denied the allegations and said some other people might have cut the trees, using Morshed's name.

Morshed's manager Md Rafikul said headmen of Lemupalong Mouza and some other neighbourhoods had sold their land and cultivated gardens to Morshed. Many of the headmen, who sold lands, had already died.

"We are cutting trees from these lands, which we have bought, after acquiring permission from the Forest Department," he claimed.

However, Hlathoyehi Marma, president of Bandarban Headman-Karbari Parishad, said, "Forests are natural resources. No one has the right to sell it. So, the claim

of purchase is not true. If anyone cuts trees from the forest, it is completely illegal."


Md Ariful Haque Belal, forest officer in Lama, said he was not aware of the issue.

"I will look into the matter and direct the officials concerned to conduct drives if the allegations are found to be true," said Belal.


This correspondent could not reach Lama UNO Mostafa Zabed Kaiser over the phone despite repeated attempts.

Lama Police Station Officer-in-Charge Shahidul Islam Chowdhury said he did not receive any such complaint over illegal tree cutting or harassment of the Mro community.

"We will take necessary legal action if we receive such complaints," said the OC.



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১৬ ডিসেম্বর ২০২৩
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সাক্ষর নং: ৪৮/৪৩/১৪০০/২০২৩/৪০১১৬(ম/স-১)-৩২২

Invitation for Tender (Works)
e-Tender Notice No: 04/2022-23
(Limited Tendering Method)

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP system portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of following works, details are given below.

Source of Fund	Tender ID	Date & Time of Last Selling	Date & Time of closing & opening
Own Fund	৪২৪৩৬৭ ৪২৪৩৭০ ৪২৪৩৭১ ৪২৪৩৭২ ৪২৪৩৭৩ ৪২৪৩৭৪ ৪২৪৩৭৫ ৪২৪৩৭৬ ৪২৪৩৭৭ ৪২৪৩৭৮ ৪২৪৩৭৯ ৪২৪৩৮০ ৪২৪৩৮১ ৪২৪৩৮২ ৪২৪৩৮৩ ৪২৪৩৮৪ ৪২৪৩৮৫ ৪২৪৩৮৬ ৪২৪৩৮৭ ৪২৪৩৮৮ ৪২৪৩৮৯ ৪২৪৩৯০ ৪২৪৩৯১ ৪২৪৩৯২ ৪২৪৩৯৩ ৪২৪৩৯৪ ৪২৪৩৯৫ ৪২৪৩৯৬ ৪২৪৩৯৭ ৪২৪৩৯৮ ৪২৪৩৯৯ ৪২৪৪০০ ৪২৪৪০১ ৪২৪৪০২ ৪২৪৪০৩ ৪২৪৪০৪ ৪২৪৪০৫ ৪২৪৪০৬ ৪২৪৪০৭ ৪২৪৪০৮ ৪২৪৪০৯ ৪২৪৪১০ ৪২৪৪১১ ৪২৪৪১২ ৪২৪৪১৩ ৪২৪৪১৪ ৪২৪৪১৫ ৪২৪৪১৬ ৪২৪৪১৭ ৪২৪৪১৮ ৪২৪৪১৯ ৪২৪৪২০ ৪২৪৪২১ ৪২৪৪২২ ৪২৪৪২৩ ৪২৪৪২৪ ৪২৪৪২৫ ৪২৪৪২৬ ৪২৪৪২৭ ৪২৪৪২৮ ৪২৪৪২৯ ৪২৪৪৩০ ৪২৪৪৩১ ৪২৪৪৩২ ৪২৪৪৩৩ ৪২৪৪৩৪ ৪২৪৪৩৫ ৪২৪৪৩৬ ৪২৪৪৩৭ ৪২৪৪৩৮ ৪২৪৪৩৯ ৪২৪৪৪০ ৪২৪৪৪১ ৪২৪৪৪২ ৪২৪৪৪৩ ৪২৪৪৪৪ ৪২৪৪৪৫ ৪২৪৪৪৬ ৪২৪৪৪৭ ৪২৪৪৪৮ ৪২৪৪৪৯ ৪২৪৪৫০ ৪২৪৪৫১ ৪২৪৪৫২ ৪২৪৪৫৩ ৪২৪৪৫৪ ৪২৪৪৫৫ ৪২৪৪৫৬ ৪২৪৪৫৭ ৪২৪৪৫৮ ৪২৪৪৫৯ ৪২৪৪৬০ ৪২৪৪৬১ ৪২৪৪৬২ ৪২৪৪৬৩ ৪২৪৪৬৪ ৪২৪৪৬৫ ৪২৪৪৬৬ ৪২৪৪৬৭ ৪২৪৪৬৮ ৪২৪৪৬৯ ৪২৪৪৭০ ৪২৪৪৭১ ৪২৪৪৭২ ৪২৪৪৭৩ ৪২৪৪৭৪ ৪২৪৪৭৫ ৪২৪৪৭৬ ৪২৪৪৭৭ ৪২৪৪৭৮ ৪২৪৪৭৯ ৪২৪৪৮০ ৪২৪৪৮১ ৪২৪৪৮২ ৪২৪৪৮৩ ৪২৪৪৮৪ ৪২৪৪৮৫ ৪২৪৪৮৬ ৪২৪৪৮৭ ৪২৪৪৮৮ ৪২৪৪৮৯ ৪২৪৪৯০ ৪২৪৪৯১ ৪২৪৪৯২ ৪২৪৪৯৩ ৪২৪৪৯৪ ৪২৪৪৯৫ ৪২৪৪৯৬ ৪২৪৪৯৭ ৪২৪৪৯৮ ৪২৪৪৯৯ ৪২৪৫০০ ৪২৪৫০১ ৪২৪৫০২ ৪২৪৫০৩ ৪২৪৫০৪ ৪২৪৫০৫ ৪২৪৫০৬ ৪২৪৫০৭ ৪২৪৫০৮ ৪২৪৫০৯ ৪২৪৫১০ ৪২৪৫১১ ৪২৪৫১২ ৪২৪৫১৩ ৪২৪৫১৪ ৪২৪৫১৫ ৪২৪৫১৬ ৪২৪৫১৭ ৪২৪৫১৮ ৪২৪৫১৯ ৪২৪৫২০ ৪২৪৫২১ ৪২৪৫২২ ৪২৪৫২৩ ৪২৪৫২৪ ৪২৪৫২৫ ৪২৪৫২৬ ৪২৪৫২৭ ৪২৪৫২৮ ৪২৪৫২৯ ৪২৪৫৩০ ৪২৪৫৩১ ৪২৪৫৩২ ৪২৪৫৩৩ ৪২৪৫৩৪ ৪২৪৫৩৫ ৪২৪৫৩৬ ৪২৪৫৩৭ ৪২৪৫৩৮ ৪২৪৫৩৯ ৪২৪৫৪০ ৪২৪৫৪১ ৪২৪৫৪২ ৪২৪৫৪৩ ৪২৪৫৪৪ ৪২৪৫৪৫ ৪২৪৫৪৬ ৪২৪৫৪৭ ৪২৪৫৪৮ ৪২৪৫৪৯ ৪২৪৫৫০ ৪২৪৫৫১ ৪২৪৫৫২ ৪২৪৫৫৩ ৪২৪৫৫৪ ৪২৪৫৫৫ ৪২৪৫৫৬ ৪২৪৫৫৭ ৪২৪৫৫৮ ৪২৪৫৫৯ ৪২৪৫৬০ ৪২৪৫৬১ ৪২৪৫৬২ ৪২৪৫৬৩ ৪২৪৫৬৪ ৪২৪৫৬৫ ৪২৪৫৬৬ ৪২৪৫৬৭ ৪২৪৫৬৮ ৪২৪৫৬৯ ৪২৪৫৭০ ৪২৪৫৭১ ৪২৪৫৭২ ৪২৪৫৭৩ ৪২৪৫৭৪ ৪২৪৫৭৫ ৪২৪৫৭৬ ৪২৪৫৭৭ ৪২৪৫৭৮ ৪২৪৫৭৯ ৪২৪৫৮০ ৪২৪৫৮১ ৪২৪৫৮২ ৪২৪৫৮৩ ৪২৪৫৮৪ ৪২৪৫৮৫ ৪২৪৫৮৬ ৪২৪৫৮৭ ৪২৪৫৮৮ ৪২৪৫৮৯ ৪২৪৫৯০ ৪২৪৫৯১ ৪২৪৫৯২ ৪২৪৫৯৩ ৪২৪৫৯৪ ৪২৪৫৯৫ ৪২৪৫৯৬ ৪২৪৫৯৭ ৪২৪৫৯৮ ৪২৪৫৯৯ ৪২৪৬০০ ৪২৪৬০১ ৪২৪৬০২ ৪২৪৬০৩ ৪২৪৬০৪ ৪২৪৬০৫ ৪২৪৬০৬ ৪২৪৬০৭ ৪২৪৬০৮ ৪২৪৬০৯ ৪২৪৬১০ ৪২৪৬১১ ৪২৪৬১২ ৪২৪৬১৩ ৪২৪৬১৪ ৪২৪৬১৫ ৪২৪৬১৬ ৪২৪৬১৭ ৪২৪৬১৮ ৪২৪৬১৯ ৪২৪৬২০ ৪২৪৬২১ ৪২৪৬২২ ৪২৪৬২৩ ৪২৪৬২৪ ৪২৪৬২৫ ৪২৪৬২৬ ৪২৪৬২৭ ৪২৪৬২৮ ৪২৪৬২৯ ৪২৪৬৩০ ৪২৪৬৩১ ৪২৪৬৩২ ৪২৪৬৩৩ ৪২৪৬৩৪ ৪২৪৬৩৫ ৪২৪৬৩৬ ৪২৪৬৩৭ ৪২৪৬৩৮ ৪২৪৬৩৯ ৪২৪৬৪০ ৪২৪৬৪১ ৪২৪৬৪২ ৪২৪৬৪৩ ৪২৪৬৪৪ ৪২৪৬৪৫ ৪২৪৬৪৬ ৪২৪৬৪৭ ৪২৪৬৪৮ ৪২৪৬৪৯ ৪২৪৬৫০ ৪২৪৬৫১ ৪২৪৬৫২ ৪২৪৬৫৩ ৪২৪৬৫৪ ৪২৪৬৫৫ ৪২৪৬৫৬ ৪২৪৬৫৭ ৪২৪৬৫৮ ৪২৪৬৫৯ ৪২৪৬৬০ ৪২৪৬৬১ ৪২৪৬৬২ ৪২৪৬৬৩ ৪২৪৬৬৪ ৪২৪৬৬৫ ৪২৪৬৬৬ ৪২৪৬৬৭ ৪২৪৬৬৮ ৪২৪৬৬৯ ৪২৪৬৭০ ৪২৪৬৭১ ৪২৪৬৭২ ৪২৪৬৭৩ ৪২৪৬৭৪ ৪২৪৬৭৫ ৪২৪৬৭৬ ৪২৪৬৭৭ ৪২৪৬৭৮ ৪২৪৬৭৯ ৪২৪৬৮০ ৪২৪৬৮১ ৪২৪৬৮২ ৪২৪৬৮৩ ৪২৪৬৮৪ ৪২৪৬৮৫ ৪২৪৬৮৬ ৪২৪৬৮৭ ৪২৪৬৮৮ ৪২৪৬৮৯ ৪২৪৬৯০ ৪২৪৬৯১ ৪২৪৬৯২ ৪২৪৬৯৩ ৪২৪৬৯৪ ৪২৪৬৯৫ ৪২৪৬৯৬ ৪২৪৬৯৭ ৪২৪৬৯৮ ৪২৪৬৯৯ ৪২৪৭০০ ৪২৪৭০১ ৪২৪৭০২ ৪২৪৭০৩ ৪২৪৭০৪ ৪২৪৭০৫ ৪২৪৭০৬ ৪২৪৭০৭ ৪২৪৭০৮ ৪২৪৭০৯ ৪২৪৭১০ ৪২৪৭১১ ৪২৪৭১২ ৪২৪৭১৩ ৪২৪৭১৪ ৪২৪৭১৫ ৪২৪৭১৬ ৪২৪৭১৭ ৪২৪৭১৮ ৪২৪৭১৯ ৪২৪৭২০ ৪২৪৭২১ ৪২৪৭২২ ৪২৪৭২৩ ৪২৪৭২৪ ৪২৪৭২৫ ৪২৪৭২৬ ৪২৪৭২৭ ৪২৪৭২৮ ৪২৪৭২৯ ৪২৪৭৩০ ৪২৪৭৩১ ৪২৪৭৩২ ৪২৪৭৩৩ ৪২৪৭৩৪ ৪২৪৭৩৫ ৪২৪৭৩৬ ৪২৪৭৩৭ ৪২৪৭৩৮ ৪২৪৭৩৯ ৪২৪৭৪০ ৪২৪৭৪১ ৪২৪৭৪২ ৪২৪৭৪৩ ৪২৪৭৪৪ ৪২৪৭৪৫ ৪২৪৭৪৬ ৪২৪৭৪৭ ৪২৪৭৪৮ ৪২৪৭৪৯ ৪২৪৭৫০ ৪২৪৭৫১ ৪২৪৭৫২ ৪২৪৭৫৩ ৪২৪৭৫৪ ৪২৪৭৫৫ ৪২৪৭৫৬ ৪২৪৭৫৭ ৪২৪৭৫৮ ৪২৪৭৫৯ ৪২৪৭৬০ ৪২৪৭৬১ ৪২৪৭৬২ ৪২৪৭৬৩ ৪২৪৭৬৪ ৪২৪৭৬৫ ৪২৪৭৬৬ ৪২৪৭৬৭ ৪২৪৭৬৮ ৪২৪৭৬৯ ৪২৪৭৭০ ৪২৪৭৭১ ৪২৪৭৭২ ৪২৪৭৭৩ ৪২৪৭৭৪ ৪২৪৭৭৫ ৪২৪৭৭৬ ৪২৪৭৭৭ ৪২৪৭৭৮ ৪২৪৭৭৯ ৪২৪৭৮০ ৪২৪৭৮১ ৪২৪৭৮২ ৪২৪৭৮৩ ৪২৪৭৮৪ ৪২৪৭৮৫ ৪২৪৭৮৬ ৪২৪৭৮৭ ৪২৪৭৮৮ ৪২৪৭৮৯ ৪২৪৭৯০ ৪২৪৭৯১ ৪২৪৭৯২ ৪২৪৭৯৩ ৪২৪৭৯৪ ৪২৪৭৯৫ ৪২৪৭৯৬ ৪২৪৭৯৭ ৪২৪৭৯৮ ৪২৪৭৯৯ ৪২৪৮০০ ৪২৪৮০১ ৪২৪৮০২ ৪২৪৮০৩ ৪২৪৮০৪ ৪২৪৮০৫ ৪২৪৮০৬ ৪২৪৮০৭ ৪২৪৮০৮ ৪২৪৮০৯ ৪২৪৮১০ ৪২৪৮১১ ৪২৪৮১২ ৪২৪৮১৩ ৪২৪৮১৪ ৪২৪৮১৫ ৪২৪৮১৬ ৪২৪৮১৭ ৪২৪৮১৮ ৪২৪৮১৯ ৪২৪৮২০ ৪২৪৮২১ ৪২৪৮২২ ৪২৪৮২৩ ৪২৪৮২৪ ৪২৪৮২৫ ৪২৪৮২৬ ৪২৪৮২৭ ৪২৪৮২৮ ৪২৪৮২৯ ৪২৪৮৩০ ৪২৪৮৩১ ৪২৪৮৩২ ৪২৪৮৩৩ ৪২৪৮৩৪ ৪২৪৮৩৫ ৪২৪৮৩৬ ৪২৪৮৩৭ ৪২৪৮৩৮ ৪২৪৮৩৯ ৪২৪৮৪০ ৪২৪৮৪১ ৪২৪৮৪২ ৪২৪৮৪৩ ৪২৪৮৪৪ ৪২৪৮৪৫ ৪২৪৮৪৬ ৪২৪৮৪৭ ৪২৪৮৪৮ ৪২৪৮৪৯ ৪২৪৮৫০ ৪২৪৮৫১ ৪২৪৮৫২ ৪২৪৮৫৩ ৪২৪৮৫৪ ৪২৪৮৫৫ ৪২৪৮৫৬ ৪২৪৮৫৭ ৪২৪৮৫৮ ৪২৪৮৫৯ ৪২৪৮৬০ ৪২৪৮৬১ ৪২৪৮৬২ ৪২৪৮৬৩ ৪২৪৮৬৪ ৪২৪৮৬৫ ৪২৪৮৬৬ ৪২৪৮৬৭ ৪২৪৮৬৮ ৪২৪৮৬৯ ৪২৪৮৭০ ৪২৪৮৭১ ৪২৪৮৭২ ৪২৪৮৭৩ ৪২৪৮৭৪ ৪২৪৮৭৫ ৪২৪৮৭৬ ৪২৪৮৭৭ ৪২৪৮৭৮ ৪২৪৮৭৯ ৪২৪৮৮০ ৪২৪৮৮১ ৪২৪৮৮২ ৪২৪৮৮৩ ৪২৪৮৮৪ ৪২৪৮৮৫ ৪২৪৮৮৬ ৪২৪৮৮৭ ৪২৪৮৮৮ ৪২৪৮৮৯ ৪২৪৮৯০ ৪২৪৮৯১ ৪২৪৮৯২ ৪২৪৮৯৩ ৪২৪৮৯৪ ৪২৪৮৯৫ ৪২৪৮৯৬ ৪২৪৮৯৭ ৪২৪৮৯৮ ৪২৪৮৯৯ ৪২৪৯০০ ৪২৪৯০১ ৪২৪৯০২ ৪২৪৯০৩ ৪২৪৯০৪ ৪২৪৯০৫ ৪২৪৯০৬ ৪২৪৯০৭ ৪২৪৯০৮ ৪২৪৯০৯ ৪২৪৯১০ ৪২৪৯১১ ৪২৪৯১২ ৪২৪৯১৩ ৪২৪৯১৪ ৪২৪৯১৫ ৪২৪৯১৬ ৪২৪৯১৭ ৪২৪৯১৮ ৪২৪৯১৯ ৪২৪৯২০ ৪২৪৯২১ ৪২৪৯২২ ৪২৪৯২৩ ৪২৪৯২৪ ৪২৪৯২৫ ৪২৪৯২৬ ৪২৪৯২৭ ৪২৪৯২৮ ৪২৪৯২৯ ৪২৪৯৩০ ৪২৪৯৩১ ৪২৪৯৩২ ৪২৪৯৩৩ ৪২৪৯৩৪ ৪২৪৯৩৫ ৪২৪৯৩৬ ৪২৪৯৩৭ ৪২৪৯৩৮ ৪২৪৯৩৯ ৪২৪৯৪০ ৪২৪৯৪১ ৪২৪৯৪২ ৪২৪৯৪৩ ৪২৪৯৪৪ ৪২৪৯৪৫ ৪২৪৯৪৬ ৪২৪৯৪৭ ৪২৪৯৪৮ ৪২৪৯৪৯ ৪২৪৯৫০ ৪২৪৯৫১ ৪২৪৯৫২ ৪২৪৯৫৩ ৪২৪৯৫৪ ৪২৪৯৫৫ ৪২৪৯৫৬ ৪২৪৯৫৭ ৪২৪৯৫৮ ৪২৪৯৫৯ ৪২৪৯৬০ ৪২৪৯৬১ ৪২৪৯৬২ ৪২৪৯৬৩ ৪২৪৯৬৪ ৪২৪৯৬৫ ৪২৪৯৬৬ ৪২৪৯৬৭ ৪২৪৯৬৮ ৪২৪৯৬৯ ৪২৪৯৭০ ৪২৪৯৭১ ৪২৪৯৭২ ৪২৪৯৭৩ ৪২৪৯৭৪ ৪২৪৯৭৫ ৪২৪৯৭৬ ৪২৪৯৭৭ ৪২৪৯৭৮ ৪২৪৯৭৯ ৪২৪৯৮০ ৪২৪৯৮১ ৪২৪৯৮২ ৪২৪৯৮৩ ৪২৪৯৮৪ ৪২৪৯৮৫ ৪২৪৯৮৬ ৪২৪৯৮৭ ৪২৪৯৮৮ ৪২৪৯৮৯ ৪২৪৯৯০ ৪২৪৯৯১ ৪২৪৯৯২ ৪২৪৯৯৩ ৪২৪৯৯৪ ৪২৪৯৯৫ ৪২৪৯৯৬ ৪২৪৯৯৭		



An illegal logging gang has been wreaking havoc on the indigenous Mro community in Bandarban's Lama upazila for many years. The gang has been cutting down trees in various neighborhoods, turning the once lush hilly areas barren. Shockingly, the local administration, forest officials, and law enforcers have turned a blind eye to the situation. The photos were taken recently.

PHOTO: STAR

Of illegal logging and reign of terror

Mro communities in Lama accuse Jubo League leader, his gang of tree felling

MONG SING HAI MARMA

A gang has allegedly been cutting trees for years in different neighbourhoods of the indigenous Mro community in Bandarban's Lama upazila. The community also claimed that when they protest this act, the gang harasses and tortures them, with the help of their muscle power, firearms and false cases. The local administration, forest officials and law enforcers have turned a blind eye to this situation, according to them.

Lemupalong, Monglaipara, Bakkapara, Dewanpara, Lohajhiripara, Charkiapara, Chalapara, Tongpreypara, Amtolipara and Bengpara of Lama upazila have fallen victim to this unabated hill cutting, found this correspondent during a recent visit. It was also seen that the hilly areas were turned barren by the deforestation committed by the hill cutting gang. A huge stock of around 250 trees was kept piled up at a local school playground in Bakkapara area. "The gang has illegally cut these

trees and stacked them here. Now, they will carry the trees by elephants to a nearby destination. They send these trees to different districts via motorised transports," said the headman of a local Mro community, seeking anonymity. Jhiris (small hilly fountains) are the main source of water in hills. However, the jhiri water has become polluted by the waste dump there, claimed locals. "We have prohibited our children to drink water from these jhiris. Recently, four children of our community became

severely sick after drinking water from these jhiris," said Charwen Mro, headman of Puraton Dewanpara. Morshed Alam Chowdhury -- a resident of Chattogram's Lohagora upazila and a Jubo League leader -- is the kingpin of the gang, alleged the people of the indigenous community. "Morshed runs a gang of around some 30 to 40 armed people. None of us even dare to speak against them," said a Mro man, seeking anonymity.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

Kishoreganj's Katiadi lights up celebrating Satyajit Ray

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A seven day fair, marking the birth anniversary of film maestro Satyajit Ray, has begun at the premises of the filmmaker's ancestral house. Katiadi upazila administration has initiated the fair at his village in the Masua region. The fair will conclude on Tuesday. Each day, the fair ends at 10:00pm, after running since morning, said sources.



Amir Uddin, a farmer of Masua, said they enjoy the fair with their family members and it brings a joyous atmosphere to the locality every year. Guests from far and wide also visit our locality to mark the occasion, said Shamsul Alam, another local. More than 200 years ago, Horikishore Ray, a prominent figure of the Ray dynasty initiated Kalbhairab Puja on the last Wednesday of Baishakh. The celebration is still known to the local people as Baishakhi Mela.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

Slain blogger Ananta remembered

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Family, friends and well-wishers yesterday remembered blogger and science writer Ananta Bijoy Das, who was hacked to death in broad daylight in Sylhet by a group of assailants on May 12, 2015. Marking his eighth death anniversary, a tribute programme was organised at his memorial in Subid Bazar area, where he was murdered. The temporary monument, "Gyaner Jyoti Chhorabe Ananta, Anantakal" (Ananta will radiate the light of knowledge for eternity), was unveiled on May 12, 2016. People from all walks of life and several

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

KHULNA CITY CORPORATION POLLS 222 candidates collect nomination papers

UNB, Khulna

As many as 222 candidates, including seven for the mayoral post, have so far collected papers to contest in the Khulna City Corporation (KCC) elections slated for June 12. The last date for submission of the nomination papers has been set for May 16, while the electoral symbols among the candidates will be distributed on May 26 after scrutinising the submitted nomination papers.



Eight candidates for the councillor post have so far submitted the nomination papers while two women for the reserved post. Those who have so far collected nomination papers for the mayoral post are -- Md Shafiqul Islam Madhu from Jatiya Party, Md Abdullah Chowdhury Aguan-71, incumbent Mayor Talukder Abdul Khaleque from Awami League, Maulana Abdul Awal from Islami Andolan Bangladesh, independent

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



PHOTO: COLLECTED

Urgent repair of embankment going on at Piprakhali village in Patuakhali recently.

Patuakhali coasts exposed to cyclone 18km of embankments at risk

SOHIRAB HOSSAIN, Patuakhali

In recent times, numerous houses, educational institutions, markets, cemeteries, and places of worship in Patuakhali's Piprakhali have been displaced; and acres of land and embankments have been eroded by the mighty Payra river. Due to the continuous erosion, the riverside village under Mirzaganj upazila is on the verge of being washed away. People's fear in the already-vulnerable coastal area has become more severe amid the situation of the possible landfall of Cyclone Mocha. Abdur Rahman from Piprakhali said, "I have heard that storm is coming... If a terrible flood occurs, who will I go?" The 75-year-old -- who has lost his house, farmland and family graveyard to the river earlier -- demanded that the government build a durable embankment to protect the village from

being disappeared into the river water. Like Abdur Rahman, many have become landless due to river erosion. Most of the levees in the coastal district were badly damaged last year and they are yet to be repaired. Also, some areas have no embankments. Under these circumstances, Water Development Board (WDB) has started repairing the dilapidated dykes in some areas. Jahangir Shikder along with his wife and three children had settled on the bank of the river Ravnabad in Kalapara upazila. However, last year, about 500 feet of the embankment got damaged by cyclone Ashani. The fisherman said he managed to take his furniture and move to another embankment. Now cyclone Mocha has increased his apprehension about the future. In the cyclone-prone region, several dykes in various upazilas -- including

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

PRAYER
TIMING

MAY 13

Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 4-10	12-45	5-00	6-36	8-00
JAMAAT 4-45	1-15	5-15	6-40	8-30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

Let's Build A Beautiful Tomorrow

Owners of land plots are invited to discuss their proposals

Dhanmondi, Gulshan, Banani, Old DOHS, Uttara, Banasree, Kalabagan, Pallabi, Mirpur DOHS, Shyamoli, Monipuripara, Green Road, Wari, Bashundhara, Shantinagar, Moghbazar, Eskaton, Segunbagicha, Paribagh, Indira Road, Mohammadpur, Lalmatia, Khilgaon, Malibagh, Bashabo & Siddheswari.

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IMRAN'S ARREST

Social media blackout fuels momentum

AFP, Islamabad

A state-imposed social media blackout to quell massive protests around the arrest of Pakistan's former prime minister Imran Khan has instead fuelled momentum for him, analysts say.

Moments after Khan was detained by a swarm of paramilitary Rangers on Tuesday, the interior ministry restricted nationwide access to Twitter, Facebook and YouTube.

Mobile data coverage — used by political activists to organise protests on messenger apps such as WhatsApp, but with far larger effects on the wider populace — was also cut.

But Khan's supporters quickly found workarounds, leaving social media awash with calls for protest and shaky handheld clips of thousands of demonstrators



clashing with police.

The move was a “crass miscalculation” by authorities, according to Shahzad Ahmad, director of digital rights organisation Bytes for All. “It's only going to work against them.”

Leading his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party in opposition, Khan remains staggeringly popular and has crafted a campaign accusing the parties and army of colluding to keep him out of power, lock him up and even assassinate him.

Blocking social media only fuels the PTI's argument, said digital rights activist Usama Khilji.

“It's adding to their popularity because it's being seen as a move to curtail basic rights of citizens.”



Migrants cross the Rio Grande River as they try to get to the US, from Matamoros, state of Tamaulipas, Mexico, on Thursday night. A surge of migrants is expected at the US-Mexico border cities as President Biden administration is officially ending its use of Title 42. PHOTO: AFP

200,000 fled Sudan: UN

Warring factions fight on after failing to agree truce

AGENCIES

Some 200,000 people have now fled Sudan to escape fighting that erupted in mid-April, in addition to hundreds of thousands who have been displaced inside the country, the UN said yesterday.

“As violence in Sudan continues for a fourth week, nearly 200,000 refugees and returnees have been forced to flee the country, with more crossing borders daily seeking safety,” UN refugee agency spokeswoman Olga Sarrado told reporters in Geneva.

The UN migration agency said earlier this week that more than 700,000 people have also been displaced within Sudan by the fighting that erupted on April 15, which has left more than 750 people dead and injured 5,000 others.

Speaking of the people fleeing the country, Sarrado warned that “the humanitarian response is challenging and costly,” pointing out that “refugees and returnees are arriving in remote border areas where services and infrastructure are scarce or non-existent and the host population was already suffering due to climate change and food scarcity.”

“The coming rainy season will make logistics even harder as many roads will become impassable,” she said.

For neighbouring Chad, she said some 30,000 refugees had arrived in just recent days, bringing the total number who have arrived from Sudan in recent weeks to 60,000, reports AFP.

“Almost 90 percent of refugees are children and women, including many pregnant women,” she said.

Meanwhile, air strikes and artillery pounded Khartoum yesterday after Sudan's warring army and Rapid Support Forces paramilitary failed to agree a ceasefire despite committing to protect civilians and allow humanitarian access, reports Reuters.

A so-called declaration of principles was signed in Saudi Arabia late on Thursday after nearly a week of talks between the two factions, which had shared power before falling out over a transition to civilian rule.

RSF adviser Moussa Khadam told Sky News Arabia the group would abide by the principles agreed to and aimed to reach a complete ceasefire. But there was no let-up in violence and the army has not commented on the agreement.

Med migrant crossings at record level

Says Frontex boss

AFP, Warsaw

Migrant crossings through the Mediterranean have reached unprecedented levels as increasingly organised smuggling gangs are producing makeshift boats much more easily, the head of the European Union's border agency said.

In the first four months of 2023, the numbers of crossings through the central Mediterranean soared almost 300 percent compared to the same period last year, with almost 42,200 entries detected.

“I have never seen this before,” Frontex chief Hans Leijten told AFP.

Ukraine claims gains around Bakhmut

Russia denies; Turkey says Black Sea grain deal extension nearing

AGENCIES

Ukraine said yesterday that its forces had recaptured chunks of territory around the embattled city of Bakhmut in the eastern Donetsk region, which has been the epicentre of fighting with Russia for months. “The enemy has suffered great losses of manpower. Our defence forces advanced two kilometres (around one mile) near Bakhmut. We did not lose a single position in Bakhmut this week,” Deputy Defence Minister Ganna Malyar said in a statement on social media. But Russia late on Thursday denied Ukraine had made any breakthroughs in the flashpoint city, saying that reports of territorial losses around the city did “not correspond to reality”. The head of Russia's Wagner paramilitary group, whose forces are leading the Russian charge to capture Bakhmut, accused Moscow's military leadership of downplaying the situation around the embattled Ukrainian town. “We must stop lying immediately,” Yevgeny Prigozhin said. Meanwhile, parties to the Black Sea grain pact are nearing a deal to extend it after talks between Ukrainian, Russian, Turkish and United Nations officials, Turkey's Defence Minister Hulusi Akar said.

Erdogan rallies his base ahead of vote

AFP, Istanbul



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan readied yesterday to meet his supporters in the final countdown to the toughest election challenge of his two-decade rule. Erdogan has been campaigning round the clock as he nears momentous polls tomorrow that put his Islamic style of rule in the only Muslim-majority

member of Nato on the line. Opinion surveys show secular challenger Kemal Kilicdaroglu with a slight advantage and within a whisker of breaking 50-percent threshold needed to avoid a runoff. The opposition was helped by withdrawal of a third-party candidate who was hurting Kilicdaroglu's efforts to hand Erdogan his first electoral defeat. Erdogan was uncharacteristically shy about making any prediction about the outcome of the election.

Taiwan publishers warn against visiting China as editor held

AFP, Taipei

Publishers in Taiwan yesterday warned their peers not to visit mainland China and Hong Kong after an editor from the self-ruled island who went missing was detained on suspicion of national security crimes.

Activists and journalists in Taiwan sounded the alarm last month over the disappearance of China-born Li Yanhe, who lives in Taiwan and is the editor-in-chief of Gusa Publishing, which releases political titles.

Beijing then confirmed that he has been placed under investigation for “endangering national security”.

In Taipei yesterday, Taiwan-based editors and activists told a press briefing that Li's case had cast a “chilling effect” over the island's literary community and many now feared going to China.

Joshua Wang, a former colleague of Li, said people working in the media, publishing and cultural sectors have been urging those in the industry to stay away.

“It doesn't just apply to the publishing industry — even people who wrote something critical of China on Facebook are afraid,” he said.

“Don't even transit through Hong Kong.”

Chinese President Xi Jinping has presided over a crackdown on freedoms during his decade in power, with pressure stepped up on dissidents, rights groups and other critics of the government.

Li's case echoes the disappearance in 2015 of five Hong Kong booksellers who distributed gossip-filled titles about China's leaders. The group later resurfaced in Chinese custody.

A dissident poet said last month it was believed Li had been “secretly detained” in Shanghai while visiting family in March.

Independent bookstore owner Chang Cheng said yesterday he would not “dare go to China”.

“Are the two sides going to continue like this? This is not okay,” he said.



Pheu Thai Party's prime ministerial candidates Paetongtarn Shinawatra and Srettha Thavisin greet supporters at the party's final campaign event in Bangkok yesterday, ahead of Thailand's May 14 general election. PHOTO: AFP

Imran Khan gets two-week bail

FROM PAGE 1

he was ousted from power last April and launched a campaign of defiance against the military.

General elections are due no later than October, and the former cricket star has accused the shaky incumbent coalition government of supplanting him in cahoots with top generals.

The 70-year-old has also made explosive claims that they puppeteered a November assassination attempt which saw him shot in the leg as he campaigned for snap polls.

Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah has vowed to re-arrest Khan, who remains wildly popular, and police fired tear gas on protestors who marched towards the High Court.

Khan was manhandled into custody by paramilitary troops at the Islamabad High Court on Tuesday, but the Supreme Court later declared the arrest unlawful and demanded the process be “backtracked”.

Yesterday, he returned in a secure convoy and walked into the building flanked by dozens of police and paramilitaries.

“Khan, your devotees are countless,” lawyers for his party gathered in front of the court chanted as the ousted leader raised a fist above his head.

Khan was arrested under the orders of Pakistan's top graft agency as he arrived for a routine court appearance in the capital.

Two days of chaos followed, with several thousand of his supporters rampaging through cities across the country in protest, setting fire to buildings and blocking roads.

At least nine people died in the unrest, police and hospitals said.

Hundreds of police officers were injured and more than 4,000 people arrested, mostly in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces, according to authorities.

On Thursday, Chief Justice Umar Ata Bandial said the arrest was unlawful because it took place on court premises, where Khan had intended to file a bail application.

“Your arrest was invalid, so the whole process needs to be backtracked,” he told Khan.

Khan remained in the bench's custody overnight under police protection for his own safety until he arrived at the Islamabad High Court, where hundreds of security forces were deployed and nearby roads shut.

Islamabad police had issued an emergency order banning all gatherings in the capital city after Khan's Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party called for supporters to come together.

Faisal Hussain Chaudhry, a lawyer for Khan, told reporters that further arrests of senior PTI leaders overnight brought the total number to 10.

“The country needs peace but such steps by the government are not helpful,” he said.

Focus on economic

FROM PAGE 12

states come together for a large alliance, but a few countries can work together on certain issues, for example, environment, which would be very useful.

He said China is making large-scale investments in this region, and the US, as global power, should also make more investments here. The Indo-Pacific Economic Framework can be quite effective, he added.

The expert said the principle that every state is equal, has sovereignty and maintains international law must be maintained by all.

Pankaj Saran, convenor of the Indian think tank Centre for Research on Strategic and Security Studies, said peace and prosperity require some basic things that include equal security for all, trust, openness and transparency.

He said Bangladesh is doing much better in economic and social indicators because of its internal stability and balanced relationship with other countries. But Pakistan and Sri Lanka faced huge problems

because of their internal governance and lack of transparency in the implementation of large projects with foreign funds without questions being asked, he added.

Building of certain infrastructures like ports having twin elements of commerce and defence in some countries of the region is also a matter of concern, said Pankaj, also a former Indian high commissioner to Bangladesh.

He said in such cases, other countries will take counter measures, which make the entire region unstable. Such tendencies must stop, he observed.

David Brewster, senior research fellow at the National Security College of the Australian National University, said effective regional arrangement in the Indian Ocean region is needed for cooperation and collaboration on environmental security and flourishing the blue economy.

He suggested that small and middle powers of the region forge cooperation and show paths for

others to follow.

Former Bangladesh foreign secretary Shamsheer Mobin Chowdhury said instability in Myanmar and the Rohingya crisis are hampering the improvement of regional connectivity.

“Ambiguity over Rohingya crisis is not an option,” he said, adding that this problem could be a security issue for the entire region.

Speaking to reporters, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam said Bangladesh does not have any military ambition.

“We want to improve the lives of our people, and establish peace and stability. Our Indo-Pacific Outlook also has the vision of having friendly relationship with other countries,” he said.

Bangladesh's former ambassador Tariq Karim, India Foundation Governing Council Member Shaurya Doval, and Indian Council of World Affairs Director Geeral Vijay Thakur Singh, among others, spoke at separate sessions of the event.

French court upholds universal jurisdiction principle

AFP, Paris

France's highest court yesterday ruled that the country could try foreign suspects under the universal jurisdiction principle, greenlighting inquiries into two Syrians accused of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

“The court recognises the principle of universal jurisdiction for the French judiciary in two cases concerning Syria,” the Court of Cassation said in a statement.

The decision allows for investigations to continue in the cases against former Syrian soldier Abdulhamid Chaban, charged with complicity in crimes against humanity, and Majdi Nema, a former spokesman for the Islamist group Jaysh al-Islam accused of torture and war crimes.

A CHOBI worth staring at

Farzana Chobi just completed silver jubilee of her acting career this year. In her long journey, she gave life to different kind of roles from small to the big screens. She also won Meril Prothom Alo award for her portrayal in challenging roles. Chobi's film *Maa*, directed by Aranyo Anawer will hit theatres on May 19. The film will be screened at the 76th Cannes Film Festival.



SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Tell us about your role in the film 'Maa'.

I will be playing the role of a Buddhist who, during the Liberation War of Bangladesh suffers from massive crisis. I am sure it will touch the audience.

Also, I would like to mention that working with Aranyo Anawer was a great experience. It is his debut directorial film.

It is said that an artiste should be flexible to challenging roles, do you agree?

I agree that an artiste should be flexible to cope up with any roles they get. Artistes are like water; they can be molded into any colour and shape. In my career of 25 years, I was never very eager to play glamorous roles, and have always been thirsty to take up different kind of roles that were challenging to portray.

You have won the Meril Prothom Alo award for one such roles, could you please tell us a bit about that project? That was Matia Banu Shuku's

project. One day, she came to me and offered me to portray the role of Shiuly Shahti, a specially-abled girl. She strictly told me that I must change myself to nearly imitate the girl so, that my own mother doesn't recognise me. I went to meet Shiuly, spent time with her. In fact, I went to schools for people with special needs, and observed them carefully. After the production was released, I was amazed to get the love and appreciation from the audience.

Which characters from Bengali literature do you wish to play on-screen?

Shesher Kobita's Labonnyo is one of my most favourite characters. Also, I like many characters by Rabindra Nath Tagore. If I get any offer from any such roles, I would try to supplement the role with my talent, to make it look as best as possible.



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

OUT AND ABOUT IN DHAKA



Borno Mala

Liberation War Museum, Agargaon
May 11-13



William Shakespeare's
Hamlet

Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy
May 19 17- 8:30 PM



Comedy Open Mic

HUTS, Anam Rang's Plaza Rooftop
May 16 8 pm

TRENDY STREAMS

Netflix
TOOTH PARI



Hoichoi
JHILLI



Chorki
MYSELF ALLEN SWAPAN



Amazon Prime
PRIMO



Disney plus
AMERICAN BORN CHINESE



WHAT'S PLAYING

OCEAN Anuv Jain

It should not come as a surprise that the artiste's songs have been circulating our playlists as well, ahead of his concert on June 1. *Ocean* was Anuv's second single studio release in 2018, when he still dwelled in niche indie Indian song playlists. The 27-year-old Ludhiana native's musical journey

started back when he was a teen, having written *Baarishein* for a girl he was in love with at only 16. *Ocean* holds a similar melancholic note that is Anuv's brand at this point, but makes up for it with sweet-but-poignant lyricism. The song has only Anuv's vocals and a ukulele as

companions making for a melodic and youthful composition. Despite the fact that the song is in English, the lilting traces of Indian notes are present in his voice. The chords sound very easy and straightforward enough to pick up, making *Ocean* a song to hum and sing along to.



PHOTO OF THE WEEK

Ashna Habib Bhabna, besides being a phenomenal actress and dancer, is also a very adept painter. One of her fans is none other than Dhallywood's most successful diva, Nusraat Faria. The two were seen together in front of one of Bhabna's paintings. However, what's interesting about the photo is, that Sabila Nur has taken a peculiar pose to capture them in frame! The first thought which comes to mind is: everyone needs a friend who is willing to sacrifice their own comfort for the perfect capture!



What's on the gram

HRITHIK ROSHAN

The Greek God of Bollywood-Hrithik Roshan turned up the heat this summer in Indo-western outfit and stunning jewellery which amped up the whole fusion look. The actor wore a black slim jacket over his deep neck Kurti with a sparkling diamond neck piece. The usually rugged looking actor appeared more soft and sophisticated as he gave off a distant but piercing glance in his photoshoot.



May peace be restored in Pakistan

We welcome SC decision on Imran Khan

After a dramatic – and violent – unfolding of events over the past three days, the Supreme Court of Pakistan has termed the arrest of PTI chief Imran Khan on the premises of the Islamabad High Court “invalid and unlawful”. The three-member bench also directed the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) and police to ensure “foolproof” security to the former PM until his production before the court. The move by the SC – which by its own admission is an “extraordinary” one, not extended to other political leaders before Khan – is certainly a welcome one, and highlights the independence that the judiciary still enjoys in Pakistan, a country where major state institutions have been weakened by severe politicisation over past decades. We hope that the ruling will calm the outraged public and restore peace in a volatile Pakistan.

Imran Khan, who has been charged in more than 100 cases – including corruption, blasphemy, and sedition – since being ousted from office, was arrested in connection to a corruption case on court premises on Tuesday, where he had gone to seek protective bail against an arrest. In the week prior to the arrest, Khan had doubled down on emphasising his allegation that a senior serving military officer had orchestrated a plot to assassinate him. The timing of the arrest, as well as the manner in which Khan was arrested, suggests that it was done to intimidate and harass him. After all, as pointed out by *Herald* editor Badar Alam, it is hardly the first time in Pakistan’s political history that the NAB, which is conducting the investigation of corruption, has been used to persecute political opponents.

What’s equally concerning as the witch hunt against Khan is the violence that has broken out across Pakistan following his arrest. PTI supporters stormed the streets in protest in Islamabad, Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar, and other cities, leading to clashes with security forces; there were attacks on military installations, including on the official residence of the Lahore corps commander. The authorities restricted access to social media platforms as well as mobile broadband, deployed the army in two provinces and arrested thousands of protestors across the country. Under the circumstances, we echo the sentiments of the Chief Justice of Pakistan, who observed that it is of paramount importance that peace is restored and constitutional machineries are allowed to function smoothly. He also called upon Imran Khan to condemn the violence following his arrest and pursue a dialogue with his opponents “whom he may not like but they are a reality” to restore confidence among the people.

We, too, hope that good sense will prevail among all and that Pakistan, as a nation, will move towards a free and fair election, without devolving into further chaos. The army’s intervention and interference, which have for far too long been deciding factors of Pakistan’s political fate, must not be allowed to override the democratic process.

Is corruption really that easy?

Exploits of former BCIC employee shows how widespread it is

The exploits of a former employee at a fertiliser factory under the state-run Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC) really make one wonder how embedded corruption is in the public system. It is as if anyone can wake up one day, decide to dirty their hands, and there will be no stopping them. The man in question, Khandakar Mohammad Iqbal (42), worked for 14 years at the Shahjalal Fertiliser Factory in Sylhet. According to a report by *Prothom Alo*, he was assistant chief accountant when he was fired for embezzlement in 2018. Later, an investigation by the CID revealed that he had embezzled Tk 38 crore during the five years when he occupied that position.

Iqbal allegedly took this money out using fake bills and receipts through companies registered under his wife’s name. Their illegally accumulated wealth includes an eye-popping 91 vehicles (microbuses, private cars, vans), several flats and land plots, two department stores, etc. Currently, the couple are in jail pending trial in a number of corruption cases filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission and the CID. The question is, how could one man embezzle so much money from a government institution? If the allegations against Iqbal are true, he had certainly had help from his colleagues and superiors. Surprisingly, no one from BCIC or the fertiliser factory has been implicated yet.

The story of Mohammad Iqbal shows just how vulnerable the whole public system – with all the government, semi-government, autonomous, and semi-autonomous offices that are run with public money – is to corruption, which is often committed using systemic loopholes and political influences. Over the years, we have frequently published reports on corruption in various sectors. Unfortunately, despite the administration’s so-called “zero tolerance” policy on corruption, it has been harder to tackle in the absence of an effective institutional accountability mechanism. Bangladesh’s public system, as a result, is increasingly becoming synonymous with corruption and financial scandals. We urge the higher authorities to undertake drastic reforms in how public offices are run in order to reverse this trend. The future of Bangladesh depends on it.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@thedailystar.net

Enhance digital literacy among all

As a new mother, I worry about the effects of technology on growing children. At the same time, I understand we live in a digital world and cannot escape it one way or the other. As such, we have to improve the digital literacy of our population. To this end, I urge the both the private and public sectors to invest in providing training to enhance digital literacy among adults and children alike, making the nation future-ready.

Rehma Chowdhury, Sylhet

Rethinking our social security budget



Dr Bazlul H Khondker
is an economist and a former
professor of economics at
Dhaka University.

BAZLUL H KHONDKER

It is budget season in Bangladesh. All the ministries have submitted their demands to the finance division (FD). The FD is balancing those against the supply of resources. And social security is an important component of the expenditure side of the budget, and is supposed to cater mainly to the poorer segment of citizens.

I was recently invited as a designated discussant to a seminar on “How to improve coverage and effectiveness of the Social Safety Net Programmes?: Findings from a primary survey”, organised by the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) and Christian Aid (CA). Based on a recently conducted survey of 436 households across Bangladesh, they found the existence of high exclusion (that is, exclusion of deserving beneficiaries from the social security list), inclusion errors (inclusion of non-deserving beneficiaries in the social security list), and leakages from the system.

The findings on the prevalence of high exclusion and inclusion errors as well as leakages are not surprising, but depressing and unfortunate. If we accept the findings (based on a rather small sample), the conclusion is that the system has made little progress since 2015. The year 2015 is considered a game-changer for the social security system in Bangladesh, much thanks to the NSSS. The National Social Security System (NSSS) is a forward-looking plan to transform the existing system into a modern and inclusive one that is powered by technology to enhance welfare for poor and vulnerable citizens. While analysing the situation, the NSSS used data from the 2010 Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES). Almost a decade ago, the NSSS had also reported high exclusion and inclusion errors, inefficiency, and leakages. On the basis of these findings, the NSSS provided proposals to strengthen programmes and systems. It recommended establishing a single register of existing and potential beneficiaries, a robust MIS, and a grievance mechanism.

Almost a decade after the approval of the NSSS, the country has not yet established a single registry system or installed a robust MIS. The National Household Database (NHD) was carried out by the BBS with financial support from the World Bank, with the aim to prepare a comprehensive database

for all households in Bangladesh. However, the fate of the NHD is still unclear five years after its inception in 2018. Even if it is made available now, the database will have lost its relevance due to demographic transitions and large income growth. Moreover, the criteria for beneficiary selection which were prepared in 2013 are still in use – raising concerns over the usefulness of these criteria due to their lack of dynamism and adaptability. In particular, the wealth criteria has become obsolete as, for example, an income threshold of Tk 10,000 per year has been used to calculate old age allowance since 2013, even though our national income has increased by about 210 percent since then.



VISUAL: REHNUMA PROSHOON

Since the implementation of the proposed system strengthening has been slow, most surveys to assess the health of Bangladesh’s social security system produce disappointing outcomes. Between March and April 2023, a pilot community-based targeting and selection process (CBTSP) was carried out in two unions in Bangladesh, under the ADB’s Covid-19 Active Response and Expenditure Support (CARES) programme and with active collaboration of the Department of Social Services (DSS). Only two programmes, old age allowance and widow allowance, were considered. One of the key findings was that outdated wealth criteria alone account for about

Bangladesh. Hence, there is a need to not only update them but to also include provision for periodic automatic updates in line with economic expansion.

The government has been following the incremental budget for SSPs in Bangladesh. But given systemic problems, such an approach is leading to large leakages and very low value for tax revenue. Thus, the FD and line ministries must cease the incremental budget approach. They must strive to use alternative approaches based on data and evidence to prepare the social protection budget.

Since the NHD is not functional, the

child programme must be different from the transfer values for old age allowance and widow allowance. Similarly, the government must use completely different transfer value criteria for merit programmes, such as the freedom fighter allowance.

Finally, a social security system is composed of three conventional pillars: (1) social assistance (SA); (2) social insurance (SI); and (3) active labour market programmes (ALMP). Both SI and ALMP are underdeveloped in Bangladesh. It is thus imperative to ensure balance between these three pillars to generate maximum benefits and ensure private sector participation.

PASSING OF SAMARESH MAJUMDAR

A star for the night sky



BLOWIN’ IN THE WIND

Dr Shamsad Mortuza
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Dhaka University.

SHAMSAD MORTUZA

This is a piece both on and not on Samaresh Majumdar. On May 8, Bangla literature lost one of its golden-age stars. Samaresh’s departure made a section of the press refer to two of his novels to announce that the author of *Kaalbela* (dark time) has transitioned to “*Kaalpurush*” (Orion constellation). Samaresh belonged to the stellar cohort of writers, including Sunil Gangopadhyay and Buddhadeb Guha, who ruled the Bangla literary scene during the last four to five decades. This generation is almost lost in space. One can only hope for a long creative life for a member of this golden age, Shirshendu Mukhopadhyay.

I read Samaresh in my teens and twenties, and I don’t think I have returned to him ever since. So, I will be writing from my memory, which will make this piece not a piece on Samaresh per se, but rather on the residual impression that he and his ideas had on me and, by extension, on our generation.

The *Animesh* trilogy – comprising *Utтарidhakar*, *Kaalbela*, and *Kaalpurush* – stirred the imagination of our generation of Bangalee youth across the political divide, as we all

hoped for a change in politics. These books taught us to relish dreams, fall in love, hate injustice, and forge both active and passive resistance. The ugly political instruments that left the central figure Animesh crippled are symbolic of our hapless state. We hang onto the free-spirited Madhabilata, hoping there would be a flowery tale of love and idealism. Instead, we find the harsh reality of their son Arka who grows up in the Kolkata slums almost as a spoiled child. By the time, Samaresh had added *Moushalkaal* to the trilogy in 2013, my interest in the type of politics that failed a generation had all but withered. The Cold War has thawed, the Soviet Union has collapsed – and pragmatism loomed large.

The *Animesh* trilogy-turned-tetralogy concerns itself with the involvement with and impact of the Naxal movement on the Bangalee middle class. The Naxalite Movement had its origin in 1967 in a tribal village called Naxalbari in Darjeeling. A peasant uprising against the landowners, fuelled by radical Maoist-Leninist ideologies, turned into an armed struggle for a classless society. The guerrilla warfare

against the state zeroed in on the capital from their peripheral rural locations to annihilate the enemies of the class.

While in West Bengal the novels are rooted in an atmosphere of a fierce uprising, and in a culture of fear and uncertainties vis-a-vis political influx under an oppressive regime, on this side of the border, these novels harped a familiar tune despite their differences. In the 80s and 90s, we were all hoping for a democratic change in the system that had been captured by a military autocrat.

Arka’s realisation that the leftist ideology is that of just another political party is a rude awakening that we all had. Even the founding principle of a welfare state, with socialism as its mantra, sounded hollow.

I have faint memories of how the illusion of political change and the disillusionments that we all experienced had found their parallels in the *Animesh* tetralogy. Animesh clung to the Naxal ideology hoping he and his friends would change the social fabric. Yet, his transformation into a political activist was accidental, to say the least. He came to Kolkata from a northern tea estate to study Bangla literature (similar to his creator Samaresh) but got shot at by police engaged in diffusing violence caused by the subversive actions of the Naxalites. His belief got dented by the Maoist Congress party, which rose to power and betrayed the leftist ideology with their corruption and nepotism. Against the backdrop of political decadence, symbolised by the crippled state of Animesh, the battles are waged. Madhabilata exudes love and reliability just like her namesake perennial

creeper that is known for its sturdy root and lustrous bloom. Her support for her partner and the son born out of wedlock drives the story of *Kaalbela*. Its prelude, *Utтарidhakar*, is all about Ani – a small-town boy with all his teen curiosities and quirkiness – becoming Animesh.

This bildungsroman was serialised in the popular Bangla literary magazine *Desh*. When Samaresh decided to end his novel abruptly, editor Bimal Kar came under serious criticism for supposedly using his authoritarian position to sabotage the political zeal of a young man. Samaresh was promoted to write a sequel in which Animesh’s girlfriend became the source of inspiration. In *Kaalpurush*, the focus shifts to the son, Arka, who wants to build a commune inside the Kolkata slum to materialise his political belief. Samaresh felt that Kolkata, under the present-day Trinamool Congress, deserves a closure for the leftist politics in West Bengal, prompting him to author the fourth part after a gap of 25 years.

Speaking at Kolkata Lit Fest, Samaresh confessed that, at times, he felt that he had taken advantage of Naxalgia (nostalgia over the Naxalite movement). Then again, behind the veneer of politics, Samaresh’s narrative has always been based on human emotions. His wish as an author had been that, as long as human emotions remain alive, at least one of his books would be read alongside those of other great authors. He does deserve a place in the creative constellation. The author of Orion will find a slot in the night sky for people to reflect on in the days to come.



Pakistan security forces guard a vehicle carrying former Prime Minister Imran Khan after his arrest at a court in Islamabad on May 9.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Imran Khan’s arrest has cracked open Pakistan’s compromised politics



Ramisa Rob is a journalist at The Daily Star.

RAMISA ROB

With former Prime Minister Imran Khan’s arrest, Pakistan’s powerful military - which has long been acknowledged to “manage” the political scene from behind the curtains - now finds its supremacy in tatters. On Thursday, the Supreme Court of Pakistan called for an immediate release of the former cricket captain and ex-PM and declared his arrest illegal - in what has been called the fastest case of post-arrest bail in the nation’s entire legal history.

For now, the decision from the top court has doubled down the pressure on the Army that used the NAB and paramilitary forces to arrest the recalcitrant Imran Khan, whose popularity with the masses has proved menacing for the current government.

Though the Supreme Court’s backing marks a win for the former cricketer-turned-politician, his troubles are far from over. Even though he got a two-week bail in the Al-Qadir trust case, there are other cases in which he can be arrested. He would still have to face the charges, and could still be convicted. Many of Khan’s senior colleagues in the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) still remain arrested.

What happens next will determine who wins in what has been a hate-love, ugly fight for power and control between the army and their 2018 leader of choice. But for now, it’s clear that Imran Khan, unlike his predecessors, will not fade away so easily; shaking the wall of military-compromised politics will be remembered as one of Imran Khan’s most significant political achievements. The Supreme Court’s decision reaffirms that and so does the nationwide unrest that followed his arrest.

Khan’s supporters have targeted

and vandalised historically off-limits army premises in surreal demonstrations; the group that ransacked Lahore Corps Commander’s residence and stole peacocks to “claim their rightful share,” is first of its kind in the nation. As covered widely, pro-Khan supporters have been chiming, “*kaha tha na Imran Khan ko mat chhed na*” (“We had warned you not to disturb Imran Khan”).

To add to the mayhem, there are allegations of rifts within the army itself, with members who struggle to accept Imran Khan’s nemesis, Gen Asim Munir, as chief. Some of the protesters around GHQ on Wednesday were reportedly family members of serving officers of the colonel and brigadier ranks.

The gestation period of the current stalemate started a while back, when the relationship between the ex-PM and the military turned sour. It’s a rule of thumb in Pakistan’s political playbook: to stay in power, you need the endorsement of the army. During his term, Imran Khan did what the military wanted, from backing Beijing belt road, chastising the West, to extending the term of Gen Qamar Bajwa, the chief of the country’s army, by three more years in January 2020.

Then once he was ousted in April 2022, Khan became the military’s biggest critic, alleging Gen Bajwa wanted him killed. If Khan and his supporters have a shared quality with the powers that be, it’s their unstoppable determination to win.

Khan has emerged as a messianic cult personality, appealing to the youth. Pakistan is a young nation, with over 64 percent of the population under the age of 30. If elections were to be held, polls, even as recent as March this year, strongly suggested he and his party, PTI,

would win.

His support is unfaltering; his party still controls Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Gilgit-Baltistan. The army’s new man, Nawaz Sharif’s brother Shehbaz Sharif, has not been able to come near that image. The battle between the military and Imran Khan gained steam, bereft of a suitable figure to counter the ex-PM.

Khan has been roaring on social media, barnstorming livestreams, painting himself as the honest messiah of the whole pack. His evergreen charismatic persona has proved more than sufficient to make masses forget his not-so-successful tenure as Prime Minister - and the fact that Khan is hardly a man of his word.

He’s played double games, taken u-turns on multiple occasions and issues, from his stance on the US and India. But none of that matters to his die-hard supporters who see him as a prophet. With an imploding fuel crisis and sky-high unemployment, civilians appeal to the anti-establishment song that Khan sings (though hypocritically, as he, too, was once a beneficiary of the establishment).

The game was destined to reach this fate. Not only was Khan struggling under the threat of the army, but the latter was also finding it increasingly difficult to contain him. Two months ago, the police had tried arresting the former cricket captain in front of his house, but it was his supporters who prevented it. Khan did not back down; neither did those he went up against. Taking him away from the public eye was the only way to stop him and bringing him back will cement that the military has accepted defeat. So it is safe to assume that in the next few days, we’ll see more shadowy efforts to repress Imran Khan.

If Imran Khan is convicted in the near future, the concerns hovering over the country are the likelihood of an irreversible meltdown. There are practically no good outcomes for either side now, unless Khan and the military negotiate and find a compromise for the next elections. But for each day that this stubborn political war drags out, Pakistan, on the brink of a sovereign default, will continue to bleed.

Two weeks in the dysfunctional megacity of Dhaka



Dr Quamrul Haider is a professor of physics at Fordham University in New York, U.S.

QUAMRUL HAIDER

Ever since leaving Dhaka in 1975, I would visit Bangladesh once every two to three years. But this time around, after a gap of six-and-a-half years, thanks to Covid-19 and a major medical procedure I had to undergo, my wife and I left New York in the late evening hours of April 4 and reached Dhaka in the wee hours of April 6.

The first thing that struck me about Dhaka is the sheer number of people. When I left Dhaka for the US 48 years ago, it was a small city of 2.2 million souls in a poor and underdeveloped nation, where life was simple but beautiful. Today, Dhaka is a dysfunctional megacity, an economic hub that has grown chaotically - outwards and upwards - to absorb more than 20 million

Bangla new year. Although people here are resilient in a way that both humbled and inspired me, the record-setting heat and humidity prevented us from witnessing the *Mongol Shobhajatra* and other outdoor festivities and cultural events of the day. Like it or not, unbearable heatwaves are here to stay and will progressively get worse.

Dhaka has the dubious distinction of being one of the 10 most polluted cities in the world, with the Air Quality Index invariably close to 200, thereby reducing average life expectancy substantially. According to the World Health Organization, “Since 1998, air pollution has increased by 39 percent, reducing the average

trash blatantly unveiled themselves at the banks of lakes and rivers. As is well-known, plastic pollution is a prelude to the greater story unfolding further away in the world’s oceans.

Notwithstanding that my time in Dhaka was brief, I was nevertheless highly impressed with the direction the country is headed. I was happy to learn that a large percentage of people are attending schools, colleges, universities, and vocational institutes.

I noticed a significant increase in female participation in the economic growth of Bangladesh. Now, besides the readymade garments industry, women are working in Bangladesh Civil Service, multinational corporations, NGOs and banks, aviation, media, information technology, defence and police forces, as well as operating trains. More importantly, in high-profile professions, such as civil service and businesses, some of them are at top-tier managerial positions, playing influential roles as decision-makers.

Unlike the hustle and bustle



VISUAL: REHNUMA PROSHOON

people who live there, and hundreds of thousands more arriving each year. The explosion in Dhaka’s population has visibly contributed to the shrinking of public parks and environment-friendly green spaces. Yet, bursting with so many people living in a concrete jungle, Dhaka is a boisterously noisy and chaotic city, bubbling with never-ending energy.

As always, Dhaka experiences huge volumes of traffic every day, leading to congestion problems. Frequent traffic jams made travelling around the city annoying and time-consuming. Despite our driver performing some questionable manoeuvres, a drive from our house in Dhanmondi’s Road 4 to the Curzon Hall took nearly 90 minutes.

The traffic is dominated by endless streams of cars, vans, motorbikes, unroadworthy buses, CNG-run auto rickshaws, scooties, bicycles, and rickshaws, alongside pedestrians, all of which often meet near-accident situations. All these modes of transportation violate traffic rules and regulations, move haphazardly, park unsystematically, and, above all, cause fatal accidents.

The strategy of the drivers is to keep their vehicles moving no matter what, even in chock-a-block conditions. When they cannot propel their vehicles forward, they move sideways, cross lanes, and nose their way in between vehicles even if the only movement possible is of an inch or two. Furthermore, vehicles make right turns from the left-most lane, a no-no in other big cities of the world. And the traffic cops, clueless about what to do, while away their time surfing the net on their phone.

I found the average traffic speed equivalent to the walking speed of a pedestrian, or at times slower, resulting in a loss of millions of working hours per day. Moreover, even though there are several flyovers at some of the busiest intersections of the city, they do not seem to have any significant effects on traffic.

During my stay, Dhakaites were staring at another sizzling summer, with daily temperatures flirting with 40 degrees Celsius, and the capital recording its highest temperature of 40.2 degrees (44 degrees with heat index factored in) in 58 years on Pahela Baishakh, the first day of the

life expectancy of a Bangladeshi citizen by 2.1 years.”

Hence, we had to be extra careful in choosing the days to be outdoors.

There was virtually no escape from noise pollution, no matter where we were - in our homes and gardens, on the streets, inside our cars, at parks, and in other public places. Most of the noise is due to the cacophony produced by the horns of vehicles plying the roads, highways, byways, and lanes of the city, in addition to construction equipment (such as jackhammers, compressors and bulldozers). Oftentimes, the sound intensity level was very close to the threshold

of unruly traffic in the city, the smooth, seamless drive on the Bangabandhu Super Highway and across the mighty Padma River on the newly-built bridge - an engineering marvel - was a pleasant surprise. Also, buying hilsa from an auction market at the Mawa ferry ghat was exciting.

I was delighted to see that rickshaw art at the back of rickshaws - the quaintest and most ubiquitous of all the vehicles on Dhaka’s streets - still exists. The art represents an impressive canvas of plebeian dreams, aspirations, and obsessions, all skillfully painted onto the metal bodies by local street artists.

When I left Dhaka for the US 48 years ago, it was a small city of 2.2 million in a poor and underdeveloped nation, where life was simple but beautiful. Today, Dhaka is a dysfunctional megacity, an economic hub that has grown chaotically - outwards and upwards - to absorb more than 20 million people who live there, and hundreds of thousands more arriving each year...Dhaka is a boisterously noisy and chaotic city, bubbling with never-ending energy.

of pain, which is 120 decibel. This is the maximum loudness humans can be subjected to, after which sound can be felt rather than heard.

As if Dhaka’s air pollution, oppressive heat, traffic and noise problems are not enough to make life unpleasant, Dhakaites must also cope with the staggering quantity of solid waste generated by an increasingly affluent society that habitually attempts to throw away their garbage in the most eco-unfriendly way. We found garbage everywhere in Dhaka - by the roads, on the roads, around the parks, in the parks, surrounding the playgrounds, in the playgrounds, by the lakes, in the lakes, inside the trash cans, and outside the trash cans. Consequently, we had a difficult time defending our sensitivities from these unsightly and smelly midden heaps.

While visiting the Curzon Hall, we were appalled to see the front lawn littered with leftover food, plastic bottles and cutleries, straws, paper cups and plates. Additionally, plastic bottles and other forms of

Popular motifs are lush vistas of rural Bangladesh, scenes of idyllic pastoral life, ornate renditions of birds, animals, and fish, and ruddy-cheeked portraits of cinematic heroes, heroines, and villains.

Dhaka may not be a place for tourists to go on a holiday to shoot pretty pictures and post them on social media, but the countryside is still laidback and gorgeous. We spent a restful day at a farmhouse in Sarabo (between Savar and Ashulia), amidst a bucolic environment that was cooler, more peaceful and serene.

Finally, I think wherever we are, life is a juggling act, and we have to work hard to keep the juggling balls going around smoothly and in sync. However, in Dhaka, no matter how hard I tried, it was extremely difficult to juggle the balls smoothly. Perhaps if I had stayed long enough, I would have started to move with Dhaka’s rhythm and truly embraced the furiously beating heart of the Bangalee lifestyle that is different from the one I left behind about five decades ago.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

1 Under

6 Get up

11 Sheepish

12 Miles of music

13 Tower setting

14 Libya neighbor

15 Houdini feat

17 Hole number

19 Ump’s call

20 Soaking site

23 Distresses

25 Foray

26 Like films in early trailers

28 Quaker’s pronoun

29 Prove false

30 Blue

31 Comic Caesar

32 “Far out, dude!”

33 Ballroom dance

35 Humidor item

38 Horse opera

41 Saw

42 Sports setting

43 Did some modeling

44 Lingerie buy

DOWN

1 Short cut

2 Juan Peron’s wife

3 Set free

4 Subtraction column

5 Mat word

6 Skilled

7 Latest fad

8 Wall climber

9 Small drink

10 Superlative suffix

16 Germany neighbor

17 Suit piece

18 Island greeting

20 Soaked

21 Michelangelo work

22 Said further

24 Reuben base

25 Brit. fliers

27 Colonist’s foe

31 Tatter

33 Jail cell

34 Fast runner

35 Upper limit

36 Altar answer

37 Ozone, for one

39 Finale

40 Bright beam

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23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44

6-16

THURSDAY’S ANSWERS

S P E L L T O N A L E

C A G E Y T A I T I

A L G A E H A I T I

R A C K J E T S E T

A C E C A B E Y E

B E L L O W E D

S L A M L U S T

B Y E L L O W E D

R I M H A S E R A

A N A L O G C A R L

S T R U M F A T A L

P R I C E U T I C A

S O A K N O T E S

SPORT

Abahani, Sheikh Jamal galvanised for title showdown

SPORTS REPORTER

A neck-and-neck race between Abahani and Sheikh Jamal will conclude with the pair on a collision course as the last round of matches in the Dhaka Premier League beckon, with the table-toppers set to face each other today to determine the champions of the 2023 edition.

However, Cyclone Mocha was reportedly set to intensify around the central and southeast Bay of Bengal so rain could very well interrupt the match at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium.

There is a reserve day on Sunday in case the weather does not allow the match to be played today. However, if the reserve day is foiled by weather too, Sheikh Jamal would end up as champions courtesy of being ahead on the head-to-head equation.

Sheikh Jamal are on course to become the only team after Abahani to win back-to-back titles and they would also be the only side bar Abahani to win the tournament twice since it gained List A status in 2013-14.

Abahani captain Mosaddek Hossain was not keen on thinking of the complications that weather could bring. "It's not in our control, so I am not willing to think about it. If the game does not take place and they become champions, I would have to say we were unlucky. But there is a reserve day so let's see what happens," Mosaddek told reporters yesterday.

For Abahani, three-time champions since 2013, it is a must-win encounter.



Abahani players, training in Mirpur yesterday, will look to beat Sheikh Jamal and wrestle back the Dhaka Premier League title today.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

As the title-run reached near the end, both teams slipped up. Sheikh Jamal lost the first game of the Super League to Gazi Group before pulling off three back-to-back wins while Abahani lost to Gazi Group in the last round of matches, meaning they need a win to clinch the title.

Abahani have performers like Afif Hossain, Mohammad Naim and Pakistani recruit Khushdil Shah they can bank on. With the ball, Mohammad Saifuddin was fit as well and will bolster a pace attack that also features Tanzim Hasan Sakib and Ripon Mondol.

"It was a bit disappointing to lose the last match given that the way we played. Abahani didn't seem like Abahani. It was something alarming and what happened cannot happen again. We have just come off a discussion and we are hopeful something like that won't happen. We trust our players," Mosaddek added.

For Sheikh Jamal, the likes of Saif Hassan, Shykat Ali, Fazle Mahmud, Nurul Hasan Sohan and Indian recruit Parvez Rasool have been in good touch throughout the tournament. Mosaddek's side looked relaxed at the end of the day, content with what they have worked before the virtual 'final'.

Abahani stars Afif, Mahmudul Hasan Joy, Naim and Nahidul Islam were enjoying a game of foot tennis as dusk neared yesterday. The players were enjoying good vibes and coach Khaled Mahmud sat down at the end of their session, going through some mental preparation.

The tournament may not have the lustre it once had, but Abahani have invested heavily and will not shy away easily. Mosaddek had identified while talking to the media that there was no 'other way around it' now. "We will have to give hundred percent effort," he said.



Opener Najmul Hossain Shanto scored his first ODI century as Bangladesh chased down Ireland's massive score of 319 in a 45-over game in Chelmsford yesterday. In reply to the hosts' 319 for six led by Harry Tector's 113-ball 140, Shanto anchored Bangladesh's batting effort with 117 runs off 93 balls as the Tigers won the second ODI by three wickets.

PHOTO: CRICKET IRELAND

Shanto, Hridoy script magnificent victory

SPORTS REPORTER

On a day that BCB president Nazmul Hassan was talking about the inclusion of Mahmudullah Riyad, Bangladesh pulled off a brilliant chase of Ireland's 319, winning by three wickets, with Najmul Hossain Shanto hitting his maiden ODI ton in a night of triumph.

Bangladesh have mostly suffered in big chases but the ground, the wicket both favoured the chase. Shanto was playing all over the ground, sweeping hard to spinners and taking on the pacers straight down the ground. Shanto was jumping with joy, roaring having scaled his maiden ton. He hit Curtis Campher for a huge six straight down the ground in the 37th over but could not quite finish the job, holed out at deep square-leg with none other than Harry Tector, the other hundred getter in the match taking the catch. Shanto's 93-ball 117 had however held the innings together. He was upping the scoring-rate when required, finding boundaries with authority.

It was a 'brutally cold' weather, as pace bowling coach Allan Donald, who came to the commentary during the Tigers' chase put it. "This is a great test for us. Throughout the last 12 months we have worked very very hard on our temperament through these phases with bat and ball. It requires now to really to bat

with our heads. It almost requires now to bully the ball on the ground, to hit the sweep as hard. It's a period where we can take very low risk," Donald had mentioned; Shanto and Towhid Hridoy were seemingly doing it.

The game had been brought to its head by a partnership between Shanto and youngster

Shanto and Hridoy at the crease. Hridoy hit five fours and three sixes during a 58-ball 68 and just when it appeared the game was going completely going away from Ireland, Hirdoy departed to George Dockrell.

63 runs were required off eight overs when Shanto departed soon after Hridoy but experienced Mushfiqur Rahim put on 29 off 17 deliveries with Mehedi Miraz.

Dockrell was right on money to remove Miraz for 19 in the 40th over. More wickets fell but eventually the Tigers got to the winning total with three balls to spare and three wickets in hand.

Earlier, a delayed start due to rain presented the ideal conditions for the Bangladeshi seamers in the second ODI, with skipper Tamim Iqbal winning the toss and electing to bowl in a reduced 45-over-a-side game in Chelmsford.

Hasan Mahmud used the new ball prodigiously, getting it to talk and causing all kinds of trouble. Tector however took apart the Bangladesh attack during a tremendous 113-ball 140, laced with seven fours and 10 sixes.

Mahmud did not get enough support from his bowling partners. Right-arm pacer Ebadot Hossain bowled relatively well, but left-arm seamer Shoriful Islam remained expensive although he picked up two wickets as Ireland posted 319 for six.



Hridoy, who came on after the departure of Shakib Al Hasan with the Tigers needing 219 runs from 28 overs.

Hridoy showed calm under pressure, using his wrists in guiding the ball early on his knock. Once he got his eyes in the shots came out one after another and the chase did not look so impossible with

‘Alcaraz the man to beat’

REUTERS, Rome

World number one Novak Djokovic said Carlos Alcaraz is the man to beat on clay and is one of the top title contenders for the French Open.

Alcaraz has won back-to-back claycourt titles in Barcelona and Madrid after beginning an injury-hit season with the Buenos Aires crown and is poised to leapfrog Djokovic into top spot in the rankings after the ongoing Italian Open.

Rafa Nadal, a 14-time champion at Roland Garros, has been dealing with a hip injury he suffered at the Australian Open in January and fears are growing the Spaniard may miss the Paris Grand Slam.

Djokovic, 35, told reporters in Rome that Alcaraz was worthy of the number one ranking.

"He's going to be number one after this tournament whatever happens. Deservedly so," he added. "He has been playing some very impressive tennis, a great level. He's the player to beat on this surface, no doubt."

"Of course, it depends on if Nadal is going to play in the French Open or not. But Alcaraz is one of the top favourites without any dilemma."

Kings fall to second straight defeat

SPORTS REPORTER

Bashundhara Kings had another hiccup as the defending champions suffered a 1-2 defeat to Bangladesh Police FC in an away match of the Bangladesh Premier League at Shaheed Smriti Stadium in Rajshahi yesterday.

It was the first time this season that the Kings found themselves on the end of back-to-back defeats after seeing their 24-match unbeaten streak in all competitions end on Tuesday following a 2-1 defeat to Mohammedan in a Federation Cup semifinal.

The way the star-studded outfit meandered against minnows Police FC perhaps showed their devastation at being eliminated from the Federation Cup and resulted in their first defeat in the BPL this season after 15 matches.

However, with 40 points from 15 matches, they maintain their 10-point lead on nearest rivals Abahani, who suffered a 2-3 defeat to lowly Chittagong Abahani in Munshiganj. Abahani have 30 points after 15 matches after recording their third defeat.

It was surprising to see Yeasin Arafat deployed in midfield instead of proper midfielders like Masuk Mia Jonny and Ashikur Rahman Fahad.

Venezuelan forward Edward Morillo Jimenez danced past left-back Rimon Hossain and centrebacks Tapu Barman and Tariq Raihan Kazi in the 32nd minute before finding the back of the net.

However, changes at the start of the second half paid off, with Rakibul Hasan availing a defense-splitting through from Robson and equalising in the 47th minute.

But Jimenez again fooled Rimon and curled in the winning strike from inside the box in the 63rd minute in a match that saw Kings fail to claw their way back despite 16 minutes of added time.

In the day's other match, Sheikh Russell played out a goalless draw against Sheikh Jamal to stay third with 22 points, one ahead of fourth-place Sheikh Jamal.

‘Messi eager to win Ligue 1 title’

REUTERS, Paris

Lionel Messi will start Paris St Germain's Ligue 1 home game against AC Ajaccio on Saturday after returning to training following a club-imposed suspension, coach Christophe Galtier said on Friday.

"I spoke with him on Tuesday to see what his mindset was and I found him very determined to play... He will start tomorrow," Galtier told a press conference.

Messi was back in training on Monday after being suspended for making an unauthorised trip to Saudi Arabia and missing a training session as a result.

French media reported that Messi was suspended for two weeks after making the trip when he was supposed to train with the squad the day after the Ligue 1 leaders' 3-1 defeat to Lorient last month.

Messi apologised to PSG and his team mates last Friday and was left out of the squad for their 3-1 win at second-bottom Troyes two days later.

PSG are six points clear of Lens and eight in front of third-placed Olympique de Marseille with four



Paris Saint-Germain's Argentine star forward Lionel Messi in training at Saint-Germain-en-Laye ahead of tonight's Ligue 1 fixture against AC Ajaccio.

PHOTO: TWITTER

games remaining this season.

Messi's future at PSG has been the subject of much speculation recently, with a source close to the Argentina captain telling Reuters that he had received a formal offer to join Saudi Arabian club Al-Hilal next season.

The player's focus is on winning the French title, however, Galtier said.

"He's very eager to win that title," the coach said.

"With him in the team we'll have to adjust compared to what we did against Troyes. Leo is Leo. I'm not going to go into statistics but when he's with us we have to strike a different balance."

PSG have lost three of their last four home games.

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“There would be fifty thousand people attending when there was an Abahani-Mohammedan game. Superstars such as [Richard] Illingworth, Neil Fairbrother, Wasim Akram, [Arjuna] Ranatunga, and Sanath Jayasuriya all played here despite the fact it was difficult to get their service back in those days. There was this charm about club cricket.”

Former Bangladesh captain
AKRAM KHAN



An undeniable need to restore club cricket’s charm

National team players are only strewn across handful sides and inevitably miss major portions of the league when national assignments arrive. A culture fixated around having that pool of 24-25 players available does not seem to lend itself to growth even as the DPL’s contributions to Bangladesh’s ODI cricket is tremendous.

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI

A rivalry is many things but, most crucially, from a sporting sense, it sets off the sparks that gets the attention, pulls in the crowds and becomes a topic of discourse. The Dhaka Premier League (DPL) too is many things but, given the current climate, the sumptuous tales of days bygone, has in many ways become a thing that will not be repeated.

Mohammedan-Abahani rivalry as a contest has waned in recent years and the current intensity of that rivalry reflects the fading competitiveness of the league itself.

Since the tournament gained List A status in 2013-14, Mohammedan have not won the competition once, whereas arch-rivals Abahani, meanwhile, are contending for their fourth title.

As far as rivalries go in team sports, the one between FC Barcelona and Real Madrid is perhaps the biggest. Early in his presidential reign, Madrid President Florentino Perez had said: “If Barcelona didn’t exist, we’d have to invent them.” It is as if the two needed each other to fuel the passion, something that established their identity. It does not serve La Liga badly either.

In many ways, Abahani-Mohammedan rivalry has suffered in recent years.

“I tell Mohammedan that if they hadn’t played the Super League (final phase of DPL), I would feel hurt, to be honest. Mohammedan are a big name in Bangladesh cricket. I really enjoyed the match against them [this season] but I’m hopeful they will organise themselves better and build a better side,” Abahani coach Khaled Mahmud, who has seen so much of the Dhaka Premier League as player and coach, told The Daily Star.

In essence, that says a lot about the current state of things. Talking about the DPL’s glory days, the eyes of Minhajul Abedin, Akram Khan, or Habibul Bashar still light up. In their Premier League hey days, playing club cricket had created their identity as national stars.

“There would be fifty thousand people attending when there was an Abahani-Mohammedan game. Superstars such as [Richard] Illingworth, Neil Fairbrother, Wasim Akram, [Arjuna] Ranatunga, and Sanath Jayasuriya all played here despite the fact it was difficult to get their service back in those days. There was this charm about club cricket,” former Bangladesh captain Akram Khan recalls.

Even local signings were of huge importance given the nature of the support for the clubs. Minhajul’s transfer from Abahani to rivals Mohammedan captured imaginations. Back

then club cricket was centred around the Bangabandhu Stadium and a large part of the fan base could gather at the clubs located there, and it helped create an atmosphere.

That charm started holding sway after an Asia Cup was played in Dhaka in 1988. “More Sri Lankans arrived along with their energetic fielding which raised standards,” Akram remarks.

Stories of how club organisers would travel at midnight, thinking their player is being seduced away are still heard. “There were big-hearted organisers back then. Maybe they didn’t pay big bucks but they gave their time. Those things are lacking,” he adds.



While that aura around the Premier League has waned in terms of having a fanbase, it still holds value to players from a financial point of view. “Clubs don’t want to play without national stars. The players, too, want to play as DPL is still a good prospect financially,” Bashar says.

Given that T20 cricket around the world has put more options on the table, the stirring signings that excite fans are a thing of the past as well.

Sheikh Jamal have risen as a strong title challenger in recent years but their upsurge would not fill the overall void created by the lack of prevailing urgency. While there are still competitive games in the DPL, the quality

is missing across a big number of matches. Many of the players are often content just to be playing the tournament.

On the other hand, starved of foreign stars that really bring attention, clubs look to rope in national team players to add dazzle to the side.

When Shakib Al Hasan kicked down stumps in the 2021 season while playing an Abahani-Mohammedan game, the incident drew attention from around the world and showed sparks of rivalry. However, such incidents also brought the discrepancies regarding umpiring and bias into the limelight.

National team players are only strewn across handful sides and inevitably miss major portions of the league when national assignments arrive. A culture fixated around having that pool of 24-25 players available does not seem to lend itself to growth even as the DPL’s contributions to Bangladesh’s ODI cricket is tremendous.

Clubs often make do without proper early planning. Shinepukur brought in Dimuth Karunaratne and successfully staved off relegation this season at the last moment. The lack of clarity on the club’s finances also does not help with definite planning.

Mohammedan packed themselves with national stars recently but it has not worked out for them, although Shakib ensured they play the Super League this season. On the other hand, Abahani have been smart with their choices and Khaled Mahmud planned the squad without relying solely on national team stars, looking for performers instead.

The teams also do not have their own grounds and only a few can bear to have their own facility. The lack of such aspects also does not help brand the league or help with scouting players.

On having organisers and coaches who have the nous to build sides and make the league competitive, Khaled Mahmud said, “I am professional towards Abahani and you need people who know what combinations to build with as I have done. I am missing Taskin [Ahmed], Liton [Das] and [Najmul Hossain] Shanto and even Afif [Hossain] was supposed to be away for national assignment but we had replacements.

“You need to trust people and you can’t just give someone responsibility to build a side three months before the tournament. Those with a cricket background understand pressure can make things tick, and there are a thousand people like that.”

The DPL is still capable of producing moments and spectacles but it is the clubs who can urge themselves to ensure those moments are not so few and far between.

‘More emotion in our time’

The Dhaka Premier League (DPL) has been the lone fifty-over domestic competition in Bangladesh that still has a huge impact in the country’s cricket. Despite the rich history, the prestigious club-based competition lost its charm over the years. In an interview with Mazhar Uddin of The Daily Star, Salim Shahed, former Bangladesh cricketer who regularly featured for Mohammedan Sporting Club, shared his memories of the tournament alongside his assessment regarding making the DPL better in the coming days. The excerpts of the interview are as follows:

The Daily Star (DS): What did DPL mean for you during your playing days?

Salim Shahed (SS): During our time, as you know, the DPL was yet to be enlisted as a List A competition. We used to have first and second division leagues while the premier league was divided into two groups through the first division. Back then, our main focus point was the ICC Trophy since we were yet to get the Test status.

DS: Was the presence of world-class players like Wasim Akram, Neil Fairbrother, Arjuna Ranatunga in DPL a huge thing for the locals back then?

SS: The interesting part was that we could assess our standard. I remember, when I first played DPL, players like Ranatunga, DL Fernando and later Wasim Akram also played in our domestic league, Raman Lamba and Sandeep Sharma as well. So, there were many reputed international players in the Dhaka league. We could realise how much improvement we required while playing with

these cricketers and, if we could perform well, it helped our confidence a lot.

DS: Any interesting story regarding the Dhaka league that you still recall?

SS: In most cases, the [DPL] title contenders back then were Abahani, Mohammedan, and Biman. One of these three teams were among the winners of the Damal Samal trophy, the league title, or the Shadhinota Cup. I recall we, Mohammedan, were unbeaten champions in the league during the 1995 season. It was a rare feat in that period and was very special for me, as a player.

DS: How do you compare the competitiveness of DPL of now and then?

SS: Now, I think, as a player you can be financially more stable and make it to the national team. We were mostly driven by passion, individual capacity, and



PHOTO: NAZMUL AMIN KIRON

Kapil Dev signs for Abahani in 1988.

love for the game. Yes, we had to financially struggle but now everything is professional, where you only have to perform to survive.

There was more emotion despite a lack of training facilities in our time. There were players like Yusuf Rahman Babu, who was one of the best cricketers of our time but not many from

this generation knows about him. Many cricketers from our generation somehow didn’t get the exposure.

DS: Do we still lack an ideal club culture?

SS: Look, it’s a controversial topic. Our clubs have contributed a lot for the growth of cricket. Clubs generally groom cricketers from the grassroots and then they go on to play for the national team.

Since achieving Test status we got the age-level structure, which led to the likes of Tamim Iqbal, Mushfiquur Rahim, Shakib Al Hasan coming through this system. This, however, was not the case for us as clubs used to feed the national team back then. Now the BCB is grooming through age-level programmes but, definitely, clubs have had a huge impact on Bangladesh cricket, which is the reason our cricket has come this far.

DS: With the ongoing evolution of T20 cricket in mind, what areas should be improved to maintain competitiveness in DPL?

SS: Look, in order to make the DPL competitive, I feel we need to have strong facilities along with a good marketing team. If you look at the IPL or even the PSL, you can see the difference and the more people you can attract, the bigger the engagement will be.

Another thing is, as a player you have to own the team. If you change teams in every other season, it doesn’t allow you to grow your emotions for the club.

‘The quality of our cricket has improved’

Nacem Islam is one of the few national discards who is still making an impact in the domestic circuit with consistent performances. The vastly experienced 36-year-old, who has seen the highs and lows of the Dhaka Premier League during his career spanning over 19 years, shared his experience of playing in the prestigious 50-over competition and provided his thoughts on different topics regarding the league during an interview with The Daily Star’s Mazhar Uddin. The excerpts from the interview are given below:

The Daily Star (DS): When did you make your Dhaka Premier League debut?

Nacem Islam (NI): The first time I featured in the Dhaka Premier League was back in the 2003-2004 season for the BCB Development squad.

DS: What are the changes you witnessed over the years since you made your DPL debut?

NI: Back then, Bangladesh had just started playing international cricket. People say the Dhaka league was more exciting in the past but the fact is, back then, we were not exposed to so much international cricket at home. Nowadays, the people of Bangladesh go to the stadiums and catch international cricket matches live, witnessing the likes of Virat Kohli and other great players playing in front of their eyes in Mirpur. I think the [quality of the] DPL is still the same but maybe the spectators have decreased because of the busy international schedule these days.

DS: As a player, do you think the intensity and competitiveness of the DPL are still the same?

NI: The pressure is still the same but previously a score of 200-220 was considered a good enough total. Nowadays, however, we see totals of over 300 being posted frequently. So, the pitch has improved a lot compared to the past. Previously, some unknown players from Pakistan used to come and score runs in bulk but things are now different as we see only players with good quality perform in the league. I must say, the quality of our cricket has improved.

DS: Do you think that the DPL is still the main source of income for the majority of the players in Bangladesh?

NI: Definitely. Even though we have the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) and other tournaments, still around 80 per cent of the local cricketers consider the Dhaka League as their primary source of income. If you compare the payment structure, it has improved. However, it can still be made better. Another fact is that we did not have the league for two years during Covid. A cricketer’s career span is limited, so it impacts us when there is no DPL. The league had incorporated the player-by-choice system for a few years which also hurt us. But it is not there anymore and we are happy about it.

DS: Do you think DPL is still the main platform for a cricketer to make an impact or to stage a comeback in the national team?

NI: Yes, definitely. The Dhaka League is the biggest and the most prestigious club tournament in the country. So, if you perform well in a season, it helps you to gain confidence as a player and the selectors do take note of the performers here. It is important to remain consistent as a player which is not easy in the DPL since it’s high-pressure cricket.

DS: As you have played all around the world, do you feel the club structure in our country requires a massive change?

NI: I had the opportunity to play in England for a small club in Liverpool. I was amazed to see their own ground, gym, indoor and other facilities. This is not even a county club, but the facilities they have is still something we lack in club cricket in our country. But now we have a few clubs like Bashundhara, who are providing good facilities, and I am sure if other clubs follow them then the cricketing infrastructure of our country will change drastically.





SUDAN CONFLICT

262 back from city of horror

JAMIL MAHMUD

Mohammad Shahadat, 29, was earning a decent living from his laundry in the Sudanese capital Khartoum until an armed conflict beginning on April 15 plunged the Northeast African country into a civil war.

The Bangladeshi man was earning between 2,00,000 and 2,50,000 Sudanese pounds, equivalent to about Tk 36,000 to Tk 45,000, a month. He was able to remit money to his family in Brahmanbaria regularly.

“Now I don’t even know whether my shop is still unharmed,” Shahadat said, adding that the assets he left behind in Khartoum could be worth about Tk 2.5 lakh.

Shahadat fled Khartoum empty-handed on May 2 along with other Bangladeshis under an evacuation effort of the Bangladesh mission there.

He reached home yesterday as a Biman Bangladesh Airlines flight carrying 239 evacuees reached Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in the morning.

Another Biman flight carried 23 more Bangladeshis who fled Sudan, the national flag carrier said in a press release.

The two batches of evacuees were first taken to a safe zone in Port Sudan on the Red Sea and then airlifted to Saudi Arabia before being flown to Dhaka by Biman.

Shahadat, who had been in Sudan since 2018, said he was stranded at his residence without food for the first five days of Ramadan soon after the conflict broke out.

“I only could go outside and buy some food after a temporary ceasefire was called,” he added.

Till yesterday, over 570 Bangladeshis who were stranded in Sudan due to the ongoing conflict have been evacuated, International



Sujon, *right*, a returnee from strife-torn Sudan, cannot hold back his tears as his elder brother, also overcome with emotion, receives him at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport. Sujon is among 262 Bangladeshi migrants who returned home from the northeast African country yesterday via Saudi Arabia in two flights.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Till yesterday, over 570 Bangladeshis who were stranded in Sudan due to the ongoing conflict have been evacuated, International Organisation for Migration (IOM) said in a release.

Organisation for Migration (IOM) said in a release.

The UN migration agency has been providing support to the Bangladesh government in the repatriation effort.

“Our foremost concern is the protection and welfare of these individuals,” Abdusattor Esoev, chief of mission at IOM Bangladesh, said in the release.

According to government officials, about 700 out of 1,500 Bangladeshis living in Sudan initially expressed willingness to return home in the wake of the civil war.

All of them were evacuated from Khartoum to Port Sudan in phases since May 2, officials said.

The first batch of 136 stranded Bangladeshis was repatriated on a Biman flight from Saudi Arabia on May 8.

Rear Admiral (Retd) Khurshed Alam, maritime affairs secretary of the foreign ministry, said no Bangladeshi willing to return home was in Port Sudan as of yesterday.

However, about 100 new Bangladeshis expressed willingness to return home from Sudan. They were in different areas of Khartoum and yet to reach Port Sudan, he told reporters at the airport.

And 137 Bangladeshis from Sudan were in Jeddah of Saudi Arabia and waiting for repatriation. They will be brought back home by the next available flight, he added.

Mohammad Arman, 36, of Narayanganj, an evacuee who reached home yesterday, said theft and mugging alongside continuous gunfire and bombing have turned Khartoum into a “city of horror”.

“I had to flee in a single set of clothes, unable to carry anything,” Arman said, sharing his experience with this newspaper at the Dhaka airport.

He had been in Khartoum for about five and a half years, recently working as a supervisor at a ceramic factory.

The Egyptian owner of the factory also fled Khartoum without paying employees their dues, he said, adding, he reached Port Sudan on May 10 and was taken to Saudi Arabia a day later.

Akbar Hossain, another evacuee who was a machine operator at a carton factory in Khartoum, said he had been in Sudan for the past eight years.

Stranded for about two weeks in the conflict, he joined other Bangladeshis working with him in the factory to arrange a vehicle and reached Port Sudan.

“In Khartoum, we were running out of food,” Akbar said, adding that at one stage he even started to fear that he might not be able to return home alive.

Focus on economic cooperation, security threat mitigation

Analysts tell sixth Indian Ocean Conference

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Foreign policy analysts have called for focusing on economic cooperation and de-escalation of security threats in the Indian Ocean region which is increasingly becoming an area of strategic contestation among the great powers.

They said that transparency in cooperation among the regional countries are fundamental to peace and prosperity.

The observation came at the sixth Indian Ocean Conference, jointly organised by the India Foundation and the foreign ministries of Bangladesh and India, at the InterContinental Dhaka hotel yesterday.

More than 150 representatives, including the top leaders and ministers, from 25 countries are taking part in the two-day event.

According to foreign policy analysts, the Indian Ocean region is becoming much more complex and contested. The US has launched its

Indo-Pacific Strategy having defence elements that some analysts say are targeted at China.

China’s claims of sovereignty over the South China Sea have antagonised competing claimants Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Vietnam.

Analysts say this is the reality when the Indian Ocean nations face some major challenges, including environmental security, human and drug smuggling. But the massive potential of their blue economy largely remains untapped.

Sinderpal Singh, senior fellow at the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies of Singapore’s S Rajaratnam School of International Studies, said one key way to regional cooperation in the Indian Ocean region is establishing economic corporation and connectivity.

Speaking at a session titled “Rise of a peaceful Indo-Pacific for a resilient global future”, he said it may not be the case that all the Indian Ocean

The principle that every state is equal, has sovereignty, and maintains international law must be maintained by all.

Sinderpal Singh
Senior fellow at the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

Biggest explosion spotted in space

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK



The biggest explosion ever seen has been spotted in space – and scientists don’t know for sure where it came from.

The blast was brighter than almost anything ever seen and has been going on for years, making it by far the most powerful such event witnessed by scientists. It has been ongoing for more than three years, and took place nearly 8 billion years away.

Astronomers have proposed a host of possible explanations for the blast: it may be a vast cloud of gas that was torn apart by a black hole, for instance. But nothing on such a scale has ever been seen before and the explosion may have come from something else entirely.

It is more than 10 times brighter than any known supernova and three times brighter than the brightest tidal disruption event, where a star falls into a supermassive black hole.

The explosion, known as AT2021lwx, took place when the universe was around six billion years old, and is still being detected by a network of telescopes.

The astronomers, led by the University of Southampton, believe the explosion is a result of a vast cloud of gas, possibly thousands of times larger than our sun, that has been violently disrupted by a supermassive black hole.

SPORT

Shanto leads Tigers to thrilling win

Najmul Hossain Shanto scored his first ODI century as Bangladesh beat Ireland by three wickets in the rain-curtailed 45-over-a-side second ODI in Chelmsford yesterday.

The left-handed batter scored 117 off 93 deliveries as Bangladesh chased down 319 in 44.3 overs.

Towhid Hossain Hridoy scored 68 off 58 to give him good support.

Earlier, Harry Tector scored 140 off 113 deliveries while George Dockrell smashed 74 off 48 balls to propel the hosts to 319 for six in 45 overs after being asked to bat first.

STORY ON PAGE 10



Smoke rises above buildings in Rafah, in the southern Gaza Strip, following an Israeli strike yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Fighting flares in Gaza again

Truce hope fades; dozens of Palestinians killed in 4 days

AFP, Gaza City

Israel and Gaza militants traded heavy fire yesterday as hopes faded of securing a truce to end days of fighting that have killed dozens, all but one of them Palestinian.

The violence has been met with international calls for de-escalation, with the European Union pushing for an “immediate comprehensive ceasefire”.

Israel announced it was “striking Islamic Jihad targets” in the densely populated Palestinian territory, while AFP journalists saw air strikes hit Gaza City.

Sirens warning of incoming fire meanwhile rang out in Israeli communities close to the border with the Gaza Strip, as well as blaring in an Israeli settlement near Jerusalem in the occupied West Bank.

Violence broke out Tuesday when Israel killed three top members of the Islamic Jihad militant group, while subsequent strikes have killed at least three other senior figures.

A high-ranking commander, Iyad al-Hassani, was killed in a strike on a Gaza City apartment yesterday, a spokesman for the group told AFP.

Hours earlier, Islamic Jihad said the latest rocket fire was a “response to the assassinations and the continued aggression against the Palestinian people”.

The launches, witnessed by AFP journalists, came after a rocket killed one civilian in the central Israeli city of Rehovot on Thursday night.



Iron rods hanging precariously from what once used to be a ceiling, protruding wires and a fan barely tied to a rod above -- this is the condition of the kitchen market in New Market. Hundreds of people use this entrance every day to visit the market, risking their lives.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

NO LESSON LEARNT

Even after multiple fire incidents at Dhaka markets, authorities yet to take necessary measures

HELEMUL ALAM

When one enters the building of Sharif Market on Chittaranjan Avenue in Sadarghat, there is a feeling of suffocation, despite the empty spaces between the eight-storey building. The building has been identified as risky in terms of fire safety. However, it only has nine fire extinguishers.

During a visit to the market, this correspondent found goods lying in its corridors, creating obstacles for smooth movement. Even the staircases were blocked by products.

However, this is not an isolated picture. Condition of most markets in the capital is similar, as the market authorities pay little to no attention when it comes to ensuring fire safety.

The fire service conducted a survey this year till April 15 on 58 markets in Dhaka and found nine of those to be extremely risky in terms of fire incidents.

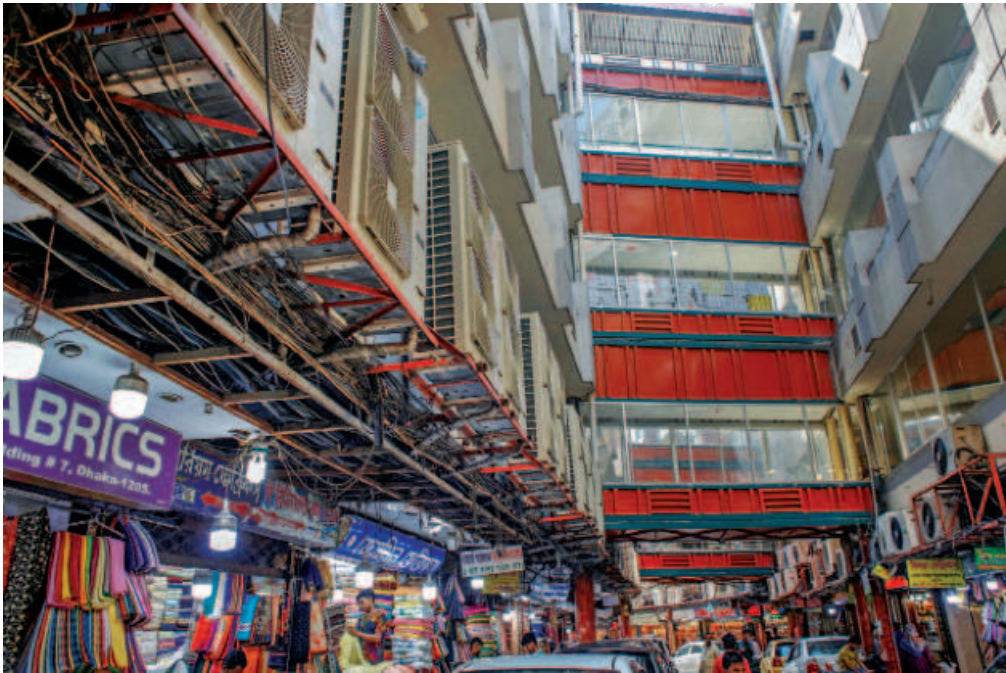
Fourteen others were found moderately risky, while the remaining 35 have been labelled as risky.

During recent visits to the markets labelled as extremely risky, the authorities' negligence

Among the nine, several markets, including Rajdhani Super Market at Tikatuli and Barishal Plaza Market at Fulbaria, have increased the number of their fire extinguishers significantly. However, the installation of other fire-fighting equipment is still a far cry.



Staircase of this market in Old Dhaka's Siddik Bazar often remains occupied, making it difficult for people to walk.



This area at Gausia market houses multiple buildings with no space between them while all the sides remain blocked.

floors of the market. No other fire-fighting equipment was found.

The corridors and spaces in front of the shops were occupied with goods even though free spaces are an important factor to ensure fire safety.

The situation was similar at all the other adjoining markets, such as Chandrima Supper Market and Chandni Chowk.

Only around 10 fire extinguishers and 10 empty buckets were found at the Chandrima Super Market, which is only around 30 to 50 feet away from the fire-ravaged Dhaka New Super Market.

At the two-storey Shahidullah Market in Chawkbazar's Urdu Road, only two fire extinguishers were found. However, both expired three years ago, on March 20, 2020.

On the other hand, the ChandiChawMarket has 17 fire extinguishers. Even those that have



A narrow staircase at Gausia market without any fire safety equipment.

a sufficient number of fire extinguishers lack trained staffers to operate them. They mostly depend on the security guards to operate them.

Only three security guards were found trained to use fire extinguishers at Siddique Bazar's Rosenil Vista Market, which has 12 fire

extinguishers for its five-storey building and three-storey warehouse.

Earlier in 2017, the Fire Service and Civil Defence surveyed 1,300 markets in the capital and found all the markets, except five, risky in terms of fire incidents.

Among those, 622 were found extremely risky, while 678 were found risky.

Kazi Abul Khayer, member secretary of Dhaka New Super Market Shop Owners Samity, said they will set up a hose reel and implement the Fire Service Department's instructions.

Asked why only two fire extinguishers were found at their market, he said they have 60 fire extinguishers, which they have kept in the Samity's office room.

Manzur Ahmed, president of Chandrima Super Market Shop Owners Association, said they are waiting for the recommendations of the Fire Service Department and will take necessary steps following their advice.

"We have already started increasing the capacity of water in our reservoir and trained our security guards to deal with fire incidents," he said.

He also said most of their fire extinguishers have been sent to be refilled and have around 40 fire extinguishers in their stock.

Contacted, Lt Col Mohammad Tajul Islam Chowdhury, director (operation and maintenance) of the Fire Service Department, said fire safety measures depend on the building and its occupancy load.

"We notify the authorities concerned to take action in this regard. We plan to do it again," he said.

"We will provide recommendations such as drafting safety plans and implementing them properly when we conduct our visits. No further recommendations are needed. We will resume our visits shortly after involving different agents, such as Rajuk, the city corporations, Wasa, NSI and DGFI," he added.

Fire safety in a precarious state

Adil Mohammad Khan in conversation with Star

HELEMUL ALAM

Fire safety in Dhaka's market buildings is in a very precarious condition, which has increased vulnerabilities for people and properties associated with these markets. The recent fire incidents in Bangabazar and Dhaka New Super Market are testimonies of these harsh realities prevailing in the capital, said Dr Adil Mohammed Khan, executive director of Institute for Planning and Development (IPD), during an interview with The Daily Star yesterday.

Adil, a professor of the Department of Urban and Regional Planning at Jahangirnagar University, said the Bangabazar fire incident also portrays that despite the immense dedication of firefighters, the fire services department is still lagging in terms of capacities, which requires a massive improvement.

"Astonishingly, many markets owned and operated by both the city corporations in Dhaka are at risk of catching fire as well. Fire safety scenarios in the markets of Dhaka have not changed that much," said Adil.

"After the Bangabazar Fire incident, fire service reiterated after a short visit that most of the markets in the capital are quite unsafe and at risk of catching fire. They are devoid of appropriate fire safety measures as stipulated in fire service law or building codes and construction rules and regulations. There are risks in the gas, power and water supply lines of these markets as well," he added.

According to the building and fire safety rules, markets should have fire extinguishers, emergency stairs and elevators, fire sprinklers, and smoke detectors for ensuring fire safety, said Adil.

"Fire drills should be made regular for markets. However, they take place rarely in Dhaka's market buildings."

"Safety audits for electric, gas and sewerage lines in the market should be conducted regularly. Walkway passages or emergency evacuation routes in the markets should be kept free all the time," added Adil.

Bangladesh National Building Code, which has important provisions regarding fire safety, is not being implemented in the absence of the Bangladesh Building Authority, as mentioned in the BNBC enacted in 2020.

"The fire service department, city corporations or the building authorities only notify the market authorities to ensure fire safety. Other than that, no stringent measures have been taken in the last few years to protect these buildings from fire," he said.

"The market authorities cannot avoid their responsibilities when it comes to negligence regarding fire safety. The Fire Prevention and Fighting Act, 2003, has enabled the fire service department to evacuate or close risky market buildings, which should be implemented if deemed necessary for any particular markets."

"Ensuring fire safety in markets requires urgency, eagerness, effort, financial investment and regular monitoring. Market owners and the relevant authorities like the fire service, city corporations and Rajuk should work together to save valuable lives and properties from fire incidents of massive scales," added Adil.

“

The fire service, city corporations or the building authorities only notify the market authorities to ensure fire safety. Other than that, no stringent measures have been taken in the last few years to protect these buildings from fire. Besides, the market authorities cannot avoid their responsibilities when it comes to negligence regarding fire safety.

Dr Adil Mohammed Khan

Professor of the Department of Urban and Regional Planning at Jahangirnagar University

FICTION

The man, the rat and the room

The man abruptly awoke, gasping for breath. He told himself it was only a nightmare in an effort to calm his racing pulse. But the solace was temporary. He looked around the room, and there was the rodent again. It scurried across the ground, leaving destruction in its aftermath. The man could no longer handle it. He seized a broom and swung it erratically in an attempt to strike the rat. However, it was too swift, scurrying away at the last second.

PRATIK MAINALI

It began with a faint sound of walls being scratched. Initially, the man believed it to be the normal sounds of an old home settling during the middle of the night. However, as the days passed, the sound became louder, more persistent, and more disquieting. It appeared as though something was attempting to enter the man's room from the darkness outside.

He initially attempted to disregard it; told himself that his imagination was playing pranks on him, or that it was merely a loose pipe in the wall. But the scraping persisted, and it soon consumed his mind. Every night, he lay awake listening to the rodent scurrying through the walls and its claws clicking against the pipes.

The man made every effort to eliminate the rodent. He set traps and used poison but nothing worked. The sound of scratching continued, and it drove him to the brink of insanity. He could hear the rodent gnawing on the woodwork, destroying his home's very foundations.

He closed his eyes and willed the rodent to leave but opening them once more, it was still there, gazing at him. He could feel the rat's eyes penetrating his very being. It appeared to be taunting him with its presence, as if to ridicule him. He knew he had to take action. This rodent could not drive him insane.

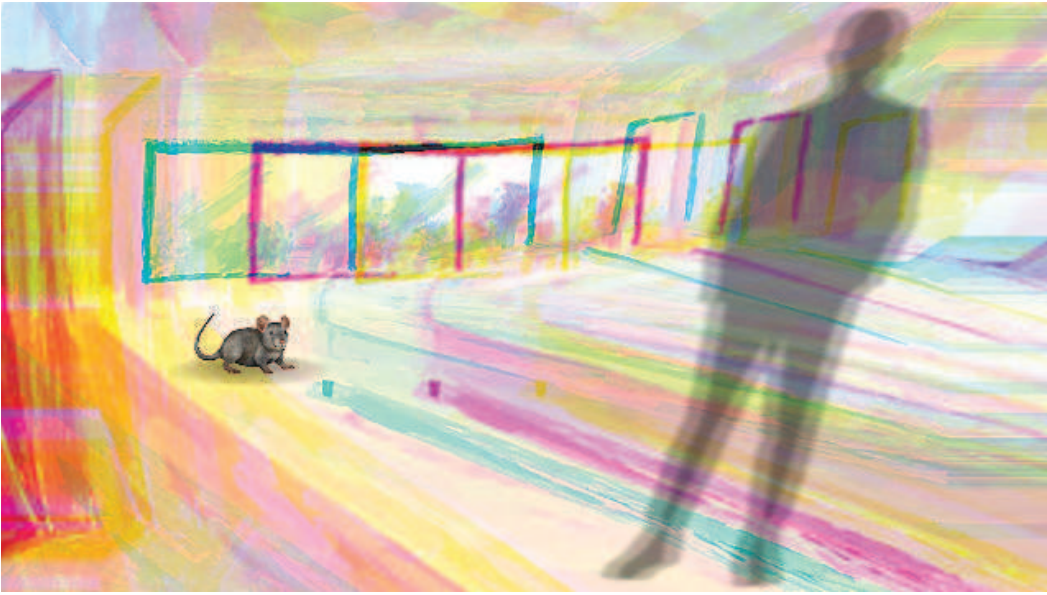
He rose carefully from the floor, attempting to avoid sudden movements. The rat observed him attentively, its tail wagging rapidly. The man knew he needed to act quickly. He reached for a nearby broom and approached the rodent with caution.

The man raised the broom above his head, but the rat did not recoil. He inhaled deeply and brought the broomstick down with all of his strength. The rat's body crunched horribly as the broomstick made contact with it. The man exhaled a breath of relief. Finally, it was over.

The man was unable to shake the feeling of unease that the rat had left in his consciousness, despite his initial relief. He could not help but picture it crawling over him while he slept, or even worse, biting him while he was defenceless. Every noise and movement in the darkness caused him to startle. Even when he attempted to distract himself by watching television or reading, he was unable to concentrate.

As the days passed, the man grew increasingly agitated. He developed severe insomnia and was unable to sleep for more than a few minutes. He constantly imagined a rodent lurking in every nook and cranny of the house. He attempted to rationalise his fears, but the persistent sensation of unease persisted.

After hours of tossing and turning, the man succumbed to exhaustion and fell into a deep



DESIGN: MAISHA SYEDA

slumber one night. However, his slumber was brief. A grating sound emanating from the corner of his bedroom roused him. Initially, he believed he was experiencing hallucinations, but the din grew louder and more persistent.

He attempted to disregard it, assuring himself that it was likely the wind or a loose shutter. However, the sound intensified, as if tiny talons were scraping against a wooden floor. Slowly turning his head towards the source of the commotion, the man's heart pounded in his chest.

In the dim light of the moon, he rediscovered the rodent. This time, it was larger and more dangerous than before. In the darkness, its beady eyes glinted, and its long, slender tail twitched avidly. The man attempted to rise from his bed, but his extremities were sluggish and uncooperative. Fear paralysed him, trapping him within his own body as the rodent approached.

It crept onto the bed, leaving filthy paw prints on the sheets. The man attempted to cry, but his throat became constricted. The rat crept closer and closer to his face, until it was almost touching it. On his epidermis, he could feel its hot, putrid breath.

The man abruptly awoke, gasping for breath. He told himself it was only a nightmare in an effort to calm his racing pulse. But the solace was temporary. He looked around the room, and there was the rodent again. It scurried across the ground, leaving destruction in its aftermath. The man could no longer handle it. He seized a broom and swung it erratically in an attempt to strike the rat. However, it was too swift, scurrying away at the last second.

In his rage, the man chased the rat through the home, breaking vases and overturning furniture. He didn't care about the damage he was causing; all he cared about was catching the rodent and making it pay for all the trouble it had caused him. However, the rodent was always one step ahead, never within reach.

The man collapsed onto the floor hours later, exhausted and vanquished. His home was in shambles, his psyche was in shambles, and the rat was still somewhere in the vicinity. He knew he could not continue living like this. He needed to do something, anything, to eliminate the rodent permanently.

At that moment, he recalled the basement. It was the only location he had never dared to enter since moving in. His vertebrae shivered at the prospect of what might be buried below. However, he knew he had no other option. He had to confront his anxieties and finally confront the rat.

The man descended the squeaky stairs while his heart pounded in his chest. The air smelled musty and stagnant, and the darkness seemed to envelop him entirely. He attempted to manipulate the light switch but was unsuccessful. He was engulfed in total darkness, the only sound being his own heartbeat.

Slowly, he felt his way along the frigid, damp walls as he made his way through the darkness. His hand came into contact with something wet and sticky, and he recoiled in dread. He was unwilling to learn what it was.

He abruptly heard it again. The sound of creaking. It had become noisier and more persistent. It appeared to originate from a location

deep within the cellar.

The man's heart pounded in his chest as he inched forward. He had to locate the source of the noise and put an end to this for good. He almost threw up when he stumbled over something soft and furry and smelled decay.

His fingertips frantically searched for anything that could assist him. Then he discovered it. An old, rusty trap covered in spider webs and grime. It was exactly what he required.

The man baited the trap with a piece of cheese he discovered in the refrigerator. In the darkness, he waited with his gaze fixed on the trap. Eventually, he heard it. The unmistakable sound of a rodent sniffing around a cheese-scented area.

As the rodent approached the trap with its nose twitching, he held his breath. The snare then closed with a sickening snap around it. The rat howled in agony as its tiny body flailed frantically.

The man approached the trap while wearing a triumphant expression. He had triumphed. He had finally eliminated the rodent.

But as he reached down to dispose of the corpse, a peculiar event transpired. The rat's eyes opened and it regarded him with unearthly intelligence. Afterward, it spoke.

In a voice that was both human and animal, it asked, "Is this what you wanted?" "Is this what you needed in order to feel better?"

The man recoiled in shock and retreated from the snare. The rat continued to speak, its voice becoming increasingly menacing and louder.

It said, "You believed you could kill me, but you cannot kill the darkness within you. You cannot eradicate the nightly dread that grips you. You cannot eradicate the memories that torment you."

The man shielded his ears in an attempt to muffle the sound. It was too late. The rat had planted the germ of insanity within him, which grew with each passing second.

His mind was racing with confusion and anxiety as he climbed the stairs. He staggered into his bedroom and fell unconscious on the bed. He knew he was losing control of reality, but he was unable to halt his thoughts from racing.

The rodent was now within him, slithering through his veins like a disease. It had taken over his mind, and there was nothing that could be done to stop it. He was doomed to spend the remainder of his life in fear and paranoia, haunted by the sound that started it all.

As the sun rose, the man curled himself into a ball, his consciousness engulfed in darkness. Everything was gone, including his sanity. All because of a single rat, a tiny creature that had infiltrated his consciousness and refused to leave.

Pratik Mainali is a writer based in Kathmandu, Nepal, and a BIBM graduate from the University of Wolverhampton.

ESSAY

PADMAVAT

Under the lens of history, politics, and literature

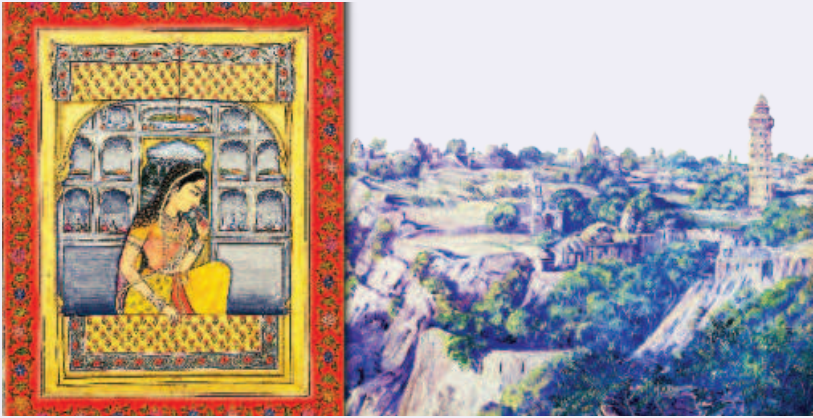
RAFID HOSSAIN

Padmavat, a tale of a mythical queen featuring love, honour, and sacrifice, has captured the imagination of readers and audiences for centuries. In 1303, the Delhi Sultanate ruler Alauddin Khalji attacked the Chittor Fort of the Rajput, located in the present-day town of Chittorgarh in Rajasthan. Around 237 years later, some 600 miles away in Awadh, Uttar Pradesh, Sufi poet Malik Muhammad Jayasi penned the epic poem "Padmavat". Many literary traditions in medieval North India featured heroic romances in which princes set out on perilous escapades in order to woo and marry princesses of legendary beauty and wealth. Jayasi's Padmavat was a sufi mystical adaptation of this formula and inspired many translations and adaptations between the 16th and 20th centuries, including Alao's popular Bangla version in 1648.

JAYASI'S EPIC POEM IN A NUTSHELL

Padmavati, the daughter of Singhal King Gandharvasen, possesses a talking parrot named Hiranman. The tale starts to unfold as Hiranman escapes execution by fleeing Singhal and ends up at the court of Chittor ruler Ratansen. Learning of Padmavati's exceptional beauty from the bird, the Rajput king embarks on a journey to pursue her. Ratansen's love for her is invested with spiritual significance as the princess manifests "divine beauty." According to the Sufi tradition, which Jayasi adheres to in his poem, the divine beauty is manifested in many forms and is a reflection of God. Pursuing such beauty requires renunciation of the appetitive self, and Ratansen does so by renouncing his kingdom and becoming an ascetic to seek the divine principle.

Meanwhile, in Chittor, a Brahmin courtier named Raghav Chetan resorts to deception to demonstrate his power and is ultimately banished by the king when caught. Determined by take revenge, Raghav cajoles Sultan Alauddin Khalji and informs him about Padmavati's incomparable beauty. He further informs him that Padmavati is a Padmini woman, the kind only to be found in Singhal and, luckily, is in Chittor at present. Alauddin then besieges the Chittor Fort and demands



Princess Padmavati ca. 1765 Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris. A painting of the fort by Marianne North, 1878.

Padmavati. When Ratansen offers to pay a tribute instead, Alauddin captures him deceitfully and returns to Delhi. Padmavati approaches Gora and Badal, influential warriors of the kingdom, for help. Disguised as Padmavati and her female companions, they maneuver their way into the fortress of Delhi in palanquins and free Ratansen.

During Ratansen's absence, Devpal, the Rajput ruler of Kumbhalner, sends a marriage proposal to Padmavati. The king learns about the offense and declares war against Devpal. Ratansen and Devpal kill each other in a duel. Following the death of the king, Nagmati, Ratansen's first wife, and Padmavati commit suicide by self-immolation (sati). Meanwhile, Alauddin attacks Chittor once again. The men of Chittor fight to the death against Alauddin. Facing an inevitable defeat against the Sultan's army, the women of Chittor commit mass self-immolation (jauhar) to protect their honor.

Alauddin acquires nothing but an empty fortress after his victory.

JAYASI INFLUENCED BY HIS CONTEMPORARY TIMES

Indeed, Chittor, in 1303, was conquered by the Delhi Sultan. However, Padmavati is not mentioned in any 14th-century historical accounts. The tale emerges almost two and a half centuries later in Jayasi's epic poem "Padmavat" - the story of the historic siege of Chittor by Alauddin Khalji, a work that historians consider nothing but an excellent

piece of fantasy fiction.

According to historians Aziz Ahmad and Ramya Sreenivasan, Jayasi's contemporary times influenced him heavily. He incorporated several near-contemporary historical or quasi-historical episodes into the characters and plot of his epic. For instance, there might have been a conscious or unconscious con founding in Jayasi's mind of Alauddin Khalji with Ghiyath al-din Khalji (1469-1500), also known as Ghiyath Shah, who had a roving eye and is reported to have undertaken the quest of Padmini, not a particular Rajput princess but the ideal type of woman according to Hindu erotology.

Ghiyath was defeated in a battle in 1488 by a Rajput chieftain named Badal-Gora. It is assumed that Jayasi got the idea for the twin characters Badal and Gora from the Rajput chieftain.

In Jayasi's adaptation, the Rajput warriors disguised as Rajput women maneuvered their way into Delhi Fort in palanquins. A similar incident reportedly took place in 1537, three years before Jayasi composed the epic poem. With palanquins full of Afghan soldiers, Sher Shah manoeuvred his way into Rohtas Fort, following a similar tactic, and seized it.

A BENGAL ADAPTATION

During the colonial period, in 1829, British Officer James Tod compiled his account of the region's history and included the story of Padmavati from a

different perspective. He also recast pre-colonial Rajput traditions from a colonial perspective, which shaped his retelling of the story. He created a religious binary in his narrative of "Hindu" resistance to the onslaught of "Muslim intruders", which is absent in the adaptations of Jayasi or Hemratan.

The influence of Tod's version, though proven unreliable at present, left a far-reaching impact. In the late 19th century and onward, the new middle-class writers of Bengal - the "bhadrolak" - produced different Bengali adaptations following Tod's account. Rangalal Bandyopadhyay's "Padmini Upakhyan" (1858), Jyotirindranath Tagore's play "Sarojini ba Chitor Akraman" (1875), Kshirod Prasad Vidyavinod's play "Padmini" (1906), Abanindranath Tagore's "Rajkahini" (1909) and many more Bengali versions were drawn based on Tod's account.

Bhadralok writers resorted to Rajput history and traditions to redraw the cultural, religious, and political boundaries between communities in the present. They suggested that the boundaries of community, culture, and conflict between "Hindus" and "Muslims" had their origins in much earlier times and are extended throughout the subcontinent.

Additionally, many of the Padmini narratives appeared in this region at times of rising political consciousness. The "Padmini Upakhyan" by Rangalal was published a year after the 1857 uprising. The Swadeshi movement was at its height when Kshirod Prasad's "Padmini" was published in 1906. Near the end of the movement in 1909, Abanindranath's "Rajkahini" emerged, following Tod's narrative, and becoming popular among school-going students in Bengal.

Padmavati became a symbol of Indian nationalism when the Bengali bhadralok writers used her as an example of a valiant sacrifice made for the motherland.

Read the rest of this article on The Daily Star website and on Star Books & Literature's Facebook, Instagram and Twitter pages.

Rafid Hossain is a graduate of Economics, University of Dhaka.

POETRY

Marooned

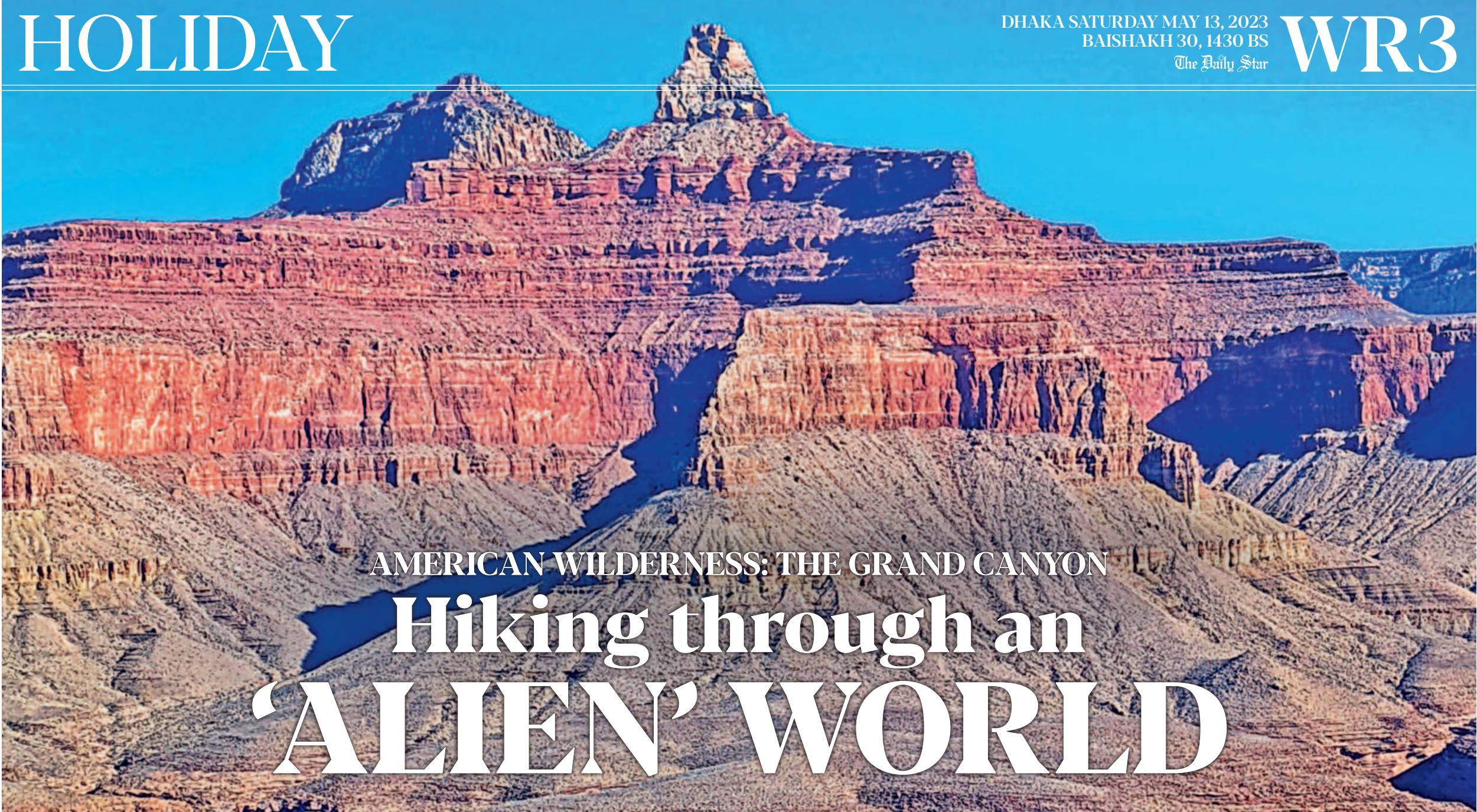
JAHANARA TARIQ

A dream of me in a sea of green
the roar of the storm sending my sparrow shaped
heart in spasms
My mum and dad,
her Tangail cotton in sattvick pleats, her pursed
mouth normally shaped into a hymn to Tagore,
now calling to me with a pulsating vein on
her temples like slated roof over simpleton
cottages;
His linen pajamas slither, helpless reptilian, gather
slim strokes of earth
his glasses, heavy, in touch with the salt-pepper
and furrowed concern
They hover at the top right of my consciousness,
a blur of an October owl, running towards me,
yanking me away
to stir fry the homegrown asparagus in three
spoonfuls of margarine and gulp it down
eagerly, with mushroom cream
"no worries love the cat's here and your massive
shaft of books sailing alright, stay all comfortable"
A remedy for a rainy day

Jahanara Tariq is an Adjunct Lecturer at Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB).



PHOTO: JAHANARA TARIQ



AMERICAN WILDERNESS: THE GRAND CANYON

Hiking through an ‘ALIEN’ WORLD



Eashan Hasan, a graduate teaching assistant at University of Tennessee, Knoxville, is an avid trekker and nature lover.

Want to share your travel experiences with us? Please send your stories to holiday@thedailystar.net

EASHAN HASAN

“Hey, what’s the most beautiful place you’ve ever been to?” This frequently asked question always baffles me. From the emerald-green waters of Amiakhum-Velakhum in Bandorban or the frozen lakes of Kinnaur Himalayas to the barren deserts of Death Valley or the stunning mountain roads of Nevada, hundreds of pictures start to flood my mind. All these places have their own charm, essence, and beauty, making it very hard to compare and choose only one or two from them. But if the question is ‘What is the most spectacular place I have ever been to?’ there can only be one answer to that – “The Grand Canyon” of Arizona! Carved by the mighty Colorado River, the Grand Canyon came into existence millions of years ago. Stretching over 445 kilometers with a depth of 6,000 feet, it is one of the world’s largest and probably the most famous canyons in the world. The distance between its two rims is around 68 kilometers, and there is a trail that goes through the mountains



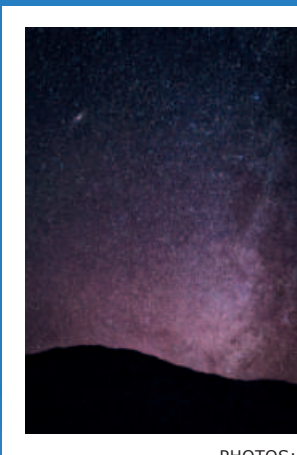
same route to the cottonwood, to that mighty river, and finally to the south rim. The phrase “out of the world” probably suits best to describe this magnificent creation – as it is indeed not unlike anything from this world! The colours, the structures, the lines, and the patterns, everything seems so alien that at a point you start to think that it just doesn’t belong here; someone must have just picked it from outer space and put it here, right in the middle of our planet! No words or pictures really can do justice to its grandness, you can comprehend it only if you are there! We were in the Grand Canyon for five days including the 3 day trek. Every moment there, we were in utter awe of this great wonder. But now it feels like those five days were just not enough; I wish I could touch and feel all those lines and patterns on the rocks, could hear their stories – what they are trying to say for millions and millions of years! But only one life is too short to do that, I guess!



and water management, knowledge about the terrain, appropriate gear, and previous experiences in a written document. You will get the permit only if you can convince them first! The second reason was the much-desired seclusion from the crowd during the peak season. Though it was supposed to be a solo trek, after a fair amount of drama my friend Sabbir joined me at the very last moment. We flew to the vibrant city of Las Vegas and made a five-hour drive from there to the Kaibab National Forest, at the boundary of the Grand Canyon. It was already around midnight when we reached there. We just wanted to set up the camp as soon as possible and get a good sleep before the adventure. It was not an easy job in that dark, freezing and snow-covered forest when the temperature was around -13°C. However, after some challenging 20-30 minutes, we could finish setting up the tent and go to sleep. The next day, the hardest task was to convince the park rangers to get

dangers here are very different from the mountains. Let alone camping in the desert with no water source, you have to go 4,500 feet downhill at a stretch in this barren sandy terrain and then you have to gain 5,500 feet more at a steep uphill stretch, that too in the knee-deep snow at the north rim! You cannot make this unless it’s at least a 5 day itinerary.” They indeed had a very good point, but we did not have that much time. We were not going to go back from halfway, either. So, the argument went on for almost half an hour until the officials gave up and approved our itinerary. Big win, we thought; but we were yet to know what such a trek in the desert can really do to our knees! We started our trek the next morning from the south rim. Sun was shining bright on the red, rocky mountain faces. Some patches of white snow on those red walls were making the moments more magical. We were enjoying the view, but at the same time, we had to be very cautious too as the hard layer of ice on it made it

and the magnificence of nature! After crossing the river, the trail started to get sandier as we entered the desert. The sun was scorching at this point, some discrete vegetation of cactuses was the only sign of life on that dead land. Though we were carrying enough water till the next campsite and sipping it at regular intervals, the moment the uphill trail started we were feeling exhausted. It continued for the rest of the day. Eventually, the sun dimmed, and a dark veil was enveloping the surrounding landscape. And, a day after continuous walking through trails and through the desert, we felt our knees. They were hurting badly. Finally, after what felt like a lifetime of hiking through that desert, we reached Cottonwood, our campsite for that night. Millions of stars were shining like pearls in the dark sky. With that heavenly beauty, we forgot all our pain as well as the freezing cold outside. We sat outside the tent, shivering, but spellbound with the just-cooked hot soup in our hands. The next day we woke up before sunrise and started to hike just after having a quick meal. It was supposed to be a long day, as we had to reach the north rim and come back to this same campsite again before sunset. We heard the infamous rattling noise of the rattlesnakes a few times last night and did not want to get bitten by one in the dark. The trail uphill was way steeper, but it was more beautiful too. Numerous lines on the rocks reminded us of the timeless work of the river. The clear blue sky in contrast with the sun-kissed red rocky mountains created a surreal environment. After a couple of hours of hiking, as we were getting near the north rim, the found snow and ice on the trail. And as we progressed, the snow got deeper and deeper. After hustling through knee-deep snow we finally reached the north rim around midday. The north rim was looking like a winter wonderland—completely covered in deep white snow. We rested there for some time, had our food, roamed around the rim a little, and started to trek down – onto the



PHOTOS: EASHAN HASAN, SABBIR



The phrase “out of the world” probably suits best to describe this magnificent creation – as it is indeed not unlike anything from this world!

and deserts to connect these two rims. Even before coming to live here in the United States, it was on my bucket list to backpack this landscape just across the heart of this grand, Grand Canyon! Finally, last winter I got a chance to check this thing off the list. Though the trail conditions would be a lot harder to negotiate in the winter and the cold would be extreme, there were a couple of reasons behind this decision. The first one – permit. It’s very hard to get a backpacking permit in the Grand Canyon National Park, due to its enormous popularity. The permits are released six months in advance, and often those are grabbed within a few days. But as the park rangers shut down all the amenities during the harsh winter months and the drinking water sources are also frozen, they do not issue a permit in advance for December – February period. You need to meet the rangers personally and inform your whole plan including route planning, and alternative options in case your preferred itinerary doesn’t work. You have to also inform them about your plan for rationing



that permit. We had a very narrow time window because of our short leave and other commitments. So, we had only three days for this 68 km trek, which we would be doing with around 17-18 kg load in our backpacks! No wonder the rangers were not pleased with our plan. And we were adamant. They were constantly saying the same thing, “Look, whatever experiences on the mountains you have don’t help here that much. It’s a desert and you have never been to one! The

extremely slippery. The trail spiralled all over the mountain, looking like a big snake going down the canyon. Following that ‘snake’, finally we got a clear view of the Colorado river – the mighty stream of water that over millions of years carved this canyon. When we got to the river, we had a view of both the rims. The majestic canyon was a jaw-dropping beauty, its utter vastness was reminding us every moment how tiny, weak, and vulnerable we are to the great power



Cutting trees to make way for air

DSTC a step ahead of environmentalists

“The northern mayor probably likes ugly things. His side of the city will not be as beautiful as my side. They can rot in hell with their trees and lack of air and wind. The south shall rise again!”

NAZIBA BAASH-ER

In a bid to help citizens during the ongoing heatwave, the Dhoka South Town Corporation has launched a tree-cutting drive across the southern parts of the capital.

Although experts and environmentalists have opposed the move for their nonsensical reasons based on fictitious science, the Dhoka South Mayor Faposh Dhur provided ironclad logic and reasons for the drive.

Speaking to this correspondent, the charming mayor said, “See, the capital is like a jungle. Too many trees everywhere. They are occupying too much space and this is resulting in low amounts of air and wind. We need bigger spaces for air and wind to pass through, and cutting the trees will give us that space.”

About the “beautification” reason given by the authorities, he said, “It’s true. Who needs green everywhere? It’s not even a pretty colour. Have you studied colour theory? Green is known to be the colour of jealousy. Are we a jealous city? No.

“Let’s just say, we are not only helping humanity, we are also making the city much prettier. I believe in the colours brown and grey, so the innumerable concrete buildings, the dirt, and dust are all contributing beautifully to our purpose. I also believe in diversity in colour, and if you want green, you can find shades of it in the drains, which are left open for your viewing pleasure.”

Meanwhile, protests have been going on across the city as environmentalists are claiming that the cutting of trees will have adverse impacts on the

atmosphere.

Regarding that, Dhursaid, “Who are these ‘environmentalists’? If they know so much, why couldn’t they be mayor? They only know science and science is the least of our concerns. Do they have logic as strong as mine? They want the city to be cooler. How will it be cooler without the space for air and wind? And where will that space come from if there are so many trees surrounding us? Did they ever ask themselves these questions?”

Asked about the “environmentalists” comments that trees help keep the temperature down through providing shade and evapotranspiration, he further said, “Hah! Evapotranspiration? You see what I mean about all this pseudo-science. These people just make up words. And anyway, what shade does a tree provide? So much

light comes through the leaves. But when you make buildings, they provide so much better shade, and when you go inside, you get air conditioning – cooler air, meaning not global ‘warming’ but global ‘cooling’ inside your own flats!”

Meanwhile, Dhoka North Town Corporation has decided to plant two lakh trees in areas under its jurisdiction, upon its mayor’s directives. The reason given by the mayor was that he too was helping citizens tackle the heatwave.

About these vastly different approaches, Faposh said, “The northern mayor probably likes ugly things. His side of the city will not be as beautiful as my side. They can rot in hell with their trees and lack of air and wind. The south shall rise again!”

Growing number of locals nominate female family members for basic tasks

MAKA BETA RAHMAN

Locals are being inspired by a city father’s mother’s decision to represent her ousted and disgraced son by nominating her herself as an independent woman ... erm ... candidate.

The incident seems to have given rise to its own set of strange events that are oddly connected to one another. For example, just recently a mayor nominated his daughter to clean up his counterpart’s dirty track record.

The power of an independent woman doesn’t seem to be lost on anyone as more and more men continue to take advantage of this phenomenon.

To find out more about the matter, this correspondent spoke to some very tired, independent women about the perils of this freedom.

“I have a very feminist husband and he generally values my independence a lot. But these days, life is so hard owing to the heatwave and traffic, and I am also very tired from breaking the glass ceiling at work every day that I usually just return home

“I hate this man’s world. My mother was better equipped to handle it because, you know, she had the power of tolerance because she had to learn where a woman’s place was. So, I have decided to take my mother to work with me. With her around, no man comes and cracks jokes with me that I have to politely laugh at.”



PHOTO: FREEPIK.COM

and don’t have the time to think about what to feed my children. My husband is the same too. So we tasked my mother to take on this task for me. Because these days, feminism means ‘ghor o shamlai, kaaj o shamlai’,” says Nasima Chowdhury.

Meanwhile, another woman said, “I hate this man’s world. My mother was better equipped to handle it because, you know, she had the power of tolerance because she had to learn where a woman’s place was. So, I have decided to take my mother to work with me. With her around, no man comes and cracks jokes with me that I have to politely laugh at.”

All in all, this correspondent returned inspired to make sure he supported his wife this evening when they went shopping for the things she had foreseen and planned beforehand, and which he tried to convince her that they did not need.

The news report, all names, characters, and incidents portrayed above are fictitious. No identification with actual persons, places, buildings, and products is intended or should be inferred.

GUARDIOLA PROMISES to cut his hair if City fail to beat Real in UCL semi

MAHBUB ALAM MUNNA

Pep Guardiola, who is popularly known for bottling Champions League campaigns, is once again dreaming again of winning it, even at the cost of his hair.

A leaked audio of one of his confidential UCL-related conversations with Zlatan Ibrahimovic has been circulating on social media, and Guardiola was heard promising that he would cut his hair and go bald permanently if he, once again, failed to beat Real Madrid.

English media and their pundits have termed Madrid’s triumph over Man City last year as “a major shock” despite Madrid being the club with the highest champions league titles. A major shock shocked Guardiola again as his team drew the first leg at the Santiago Bernabeu.

However, the 1-1 tie of the first leg has inspired Guardiola to be more ruthless against Madrid this Thursday at their home ground, Etihad, which is more famous for its emptiness and surreal quiescence than UCL

wins. Guardiola has reportedly urged fans to be loud and proud of their team as they are going to smash Real Madrid, echoing Wayne Rooney’s sentiment.

“I am begging you to fill the emptiness of Etihad and be the eye-witnesses of sublime glory. Your responsibility is to be chaotic and my responsibility is to beat Madrid. If I fail to do that, I promise, I will cut my hair completely and go bald permanently,” Guardiola said in the secret message sent via the Zlatan conversation to Man City’s easily-countable fans, which was obtained by a Satireday correspondent later.

On the contrary Real Madrid fans seemed relaxed ahead of their crucial away match in England.

When asked why they were so calm and confident about their victory in the second leg, set to kick off in England days later, Tausif, a die-hard Madrid fan from Basabo, said, “Well, we don’t consider it an away match. We will surely outnumber their fans in their own stadium, which eventually will make our players think that they are actually playing in

our home ground.”

When asked why he was so sure about their domination, he said, “Why wouldn’t I be? I have more friends on my Facebook than there are Man City fans in their country.”

However, ever since Guardiola’s promise went public, fans, borrowed from PSG and Barcelona, started to celebrate their potential victory over Madrid. While a group of mercenary fans was planning what they would do after Manchester City’s victory over Inter Milan in the final, our Satireday correspondent intruded.

When asked what was more likely to happen – Guardiola goes bald or Man City win their first Champions League title -- Zuabair, a mercenary fan from Barcelona, said, “Bro, how can Madrid win against Man City, that too, after Guardiola’s greatest ever threat?”

Another fan, Sakib, said both outcomes were equally likely and might not be mutually exclusive.

Satireday tried to contact Pep Guardiola about the validity of his viral comment, but he said “No ingles”.



PHOTO: REUTERS